

Signage for the "12-12-12" concert is displayed on the Madison Square Garden jumbotron, Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2012, in New York. With a once-a-century date arriving Wednesday, people across the United States are betting on good fortune for 12-12-12.

(AP Photo/John Minchillo)

BRIDGET MURPHY

Associated Press

A sixth-grader will put aside her nerves and get her ears pierced on her 12th birthday. Two law-enforcement officials will exchange wedding vows at 12:12 p.m. in Pittsburgh's federal courthouse. And gamblers can take advantage of promotions some casinos are using to lure in patrons who want to test their luck. With a once-a-century date arriving Wednesday, some

people across the United States are betting on good fortune for 12-12-12.

In New England, Foxwoods Resort Casino in Connecticut will offer \$12 in free slots play to rewards cards members who sink \$12 into the slots.

A Michigan casino is also betting that 12-12-12 is going to be a lucky day for opening its new hotel. A ribbon-cutting is planned for 12:12 p.m. Wednesday for the eight-story, 242-room

hotel at FireKeepers Casino near Battle Creek.

Hours later, Anna Gandy, of Battle Creek, Michigan, will head to the Lakeview Square Mall after school lets out. She realized last year that she would turn 12 on 12-12-12, her father Bryan Gandy said Tuesday. But between her sports team commitments and nerves, Anna decided to wait until Wednesday to get her ears pierced.

"She's been looking for-

ward to it for a year," he said of the special birthday. "She obviously likes the number 12."

Fans of some of music's biggest names will feel lucky to see them share a stage Wednesday in New York's Madison Square Garden. The charity show for Superstorm Sandy victims has been dubbed the "12-12-12" concert and will include Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band, Paul McCartney, the Rolling Stones, the

Who, Eric Clapton, Billy Joel, Kanye West, Alicia Keys and Bon Jovi.

For Green Bay Packers fans, Wednesday's date also will carry special meaning. Quarterback Aaron Rodgers wears No. 12, and the Wisconsin state Legislature has designated the day Aaron Rodgers Day in honor of the Super Bowl winner and last year's MVP.

Continued on Page 3

Heavy snow, cold temps keep Eastern Europe in deep freeze

PREDrag MILIC
Associated Press

PODGORICA, Montenegro

(AP) — Blizzards blocked roads, stranded villages, disrupted power supplies and temporarily shut down an airport in the Balkans on Tuesday, the fourth straight day of tough winter weather in the region of southeastern Europe.

In one of the worst-hit areas, snowdrifts and avalanches blocked roads in hilly northern Montenegro, where about a meter (3 feet) of snow fell overnight, officials said.

Across the border in southwestern Serbia, heavy snowfall blocked roads to more than a dozen villages, with some left without electricity and schools being closed for the rest of the week, officials said.

"We have got heavy ma-

chinery out and we are doing all we can," said emergency official Samir Bakic. "The wind is making the effort more difficult."

At least nine deaths across the region have been blamed on the snow and deep freeze, with temperatures as low as minus-15 Celsius (5 degrees Fahrenheit).

Elsewhere in Serbia, where snow began to fall Saturday, officials said road crews were still struggling to clear even the central squares of some cities.

Authorities banned heavy trucks from Serbia's roads, saying they want to prevent them from skidding and blocking passages.

Predrag Maric, Serbia's top emergency official, apologized Tuesday for failing to clear roads over the weekend, when hundreds of

people were stranded in buses and cars.

To the south, in Kosovo, heavy snow blocked villages in the west, toward the border with Albania, where classes in local schools were suspended.

Traffic was snarled elsewhere too, authorities in Kosovo said.

The milder climates of Montenegro's capital, Podgorica, and the nation's Adriatic coast usually escape tough winter weather, but snow is blanketing Podgorica, too, and closed its airport for much of the day Tuesday.

In Bosnia, some areas were left without electricity. And in Croatia, doctors warned the elderly and sick to stay indoors as hospitals reported dozens of cases of broken limbs from falls on the ice and snow. □



People cross a street covered with snow and ice in Skopje, Macedonia, on Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2012. The weather forecast predicts continuing snowfall and low temperatures for the next days in Eastern Europe. (AP Photo/Boris Grdanoski)

New challenges for constitutional referendum as loan is postponed

David D. Kirkpatrick
© 2012 New York Times

CAIRO — In the latest challenge to President Mohammed Morsi, the main association of Egyptian judges announced Tuesday that 90 percent of its members will refuse to monitor the referendum set for Saturday on an Islamist-backed draft constitution. The action is meant to protest the draft and the president's decree, since withdrawn,

that temporarily set his decisions beyond the reach of judicial review.

Egyptian law requires judicial supervision of elections. Advisers to Morsi said that they had lined up enough willing judicial officials to proceed with the voting on Saturday. But the announcement by Ahmed Zend, chief of the Judges Club, may influence the debate among opponents over whether to campaign

for votes against the draft constitution or boycott the referendum entirely.

In his remarks, Zend accused Morsi of repeatedly attacking the "sacredness" of the Egyptian judiciary. "The head of the Judges Club does not betray the judiciary, and does not betray Egypt," Zend said, referring to himself. Still, Zend has little influence over Morsi's Islamist supporters. □

AROUND THE WORLD

Vatican assures world not ending

VATICAN CITY (AP) — The Vatican's top astronomer has some assurances to offer: The world won't be ending in 10 days, despite predictions to the contrary. The Rev. Jose Funes, director of the Vatican Observatory, wrote in Wednesday's Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano* that "it's not even worth discussing" doomsday scenarios based on the Mayan calendar that are flooding the Internet ahead of the purported Dec. 21 apocalypse. Yes, Funes wrote, the universe is expanding and if some models are correct, will at one point "break away" — but not for billions of years. The Mayan Long Count calendar begins in 3,114 B.C., marking time in roughly 394-year periods known as Baktuns. □

Radical Islamists kill 15 in Nigeria

MAIDUGURI, Nigeria (AP) — A shootout in northeastern Nigeria between security forces and members of a radical Islamist sect killed at least 15 people, including a local police chief, authorities said Tuesday.

The shootings took place in the city of Potiskum, which has increasingly become the scene of violent attacks by the sect known as Boko Haram. Army spokesman Lt. Eli Lazarus said the attack began late Sunday night in the city and went on for hours after suspected sect members bombed a local police station and attacked a bank branch. Lazarus said the dead included a police chief and 14 suspected Boko Haram members. Nigeria's military routinely downplays such casualties. □

Brazil says beef is free of mad cow

SAO PAULO (AP) — Brazil is working to convince importers that its beef is free of mad cow disease, the Agriculture Ministry said Tuesday. The campaign follows a ministry report saying that the carcass of a cow that died two years ago in southern Brazil contained disease-carrying proteins, or prions, but the animal did not "manifest the disease nor die of it". "This episode does not pose any risk to public health or animal sanitary safety, considering that the animal did not die of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (the scientific name of mad cow disease) and the fact that it was buried in the property itself," the ministry said in a statement. Japan's government has already placed a ban on Brazilian beef. □

UK to legalize same-sex marriage

LONDON (AP) — The British government announced Tuesday that it will introduce a bill next year legalizing gay marriage — but banning the Church of England from conducting same-sex ceremonies.

Equalities minister Maria Miller said the legislation would authorize same-sex civil marriages, as well as religious ceremonies if religions decide to "opt in." "I feel strongly that, if a couple wish to show their love and commitment to each other, the state should not stand in their way," Miller said. "For me, extending marriage to same-sex couples will strengthen, not weaken, this vital institution." Some religious groups have expressed interest in conducting same-sex ceremonies. □

Cayman Islands Premier arrested

KINGSTON, Jamaica (AP) — The leader of the Cayman Islands' government was arrested Tuesday on suspicion of theft, abuse of office, and breach of trust in the famed Caribbean tax haven. Premier McKeewa Bush was arrested at his home in the West Bay section of Grand Cayman island by officers from the Royal Cayman Islands Police Service. The 57-year-old Bush was detained "in connection with a number of ongoing police investigations," Dougall said in a statement. It said the probes involve suspected theft related to misuse of a government credit card and breach of trust, abuse of office and conflict of interest for the alleged importation of unspecified explosive substances without valid permits. □

Americans find dozens of ways to mark 12-12-12

Continued from front

Some businesses are encouraging employees to wear Rodgers jerseys and make \$12 donations to a charity fund.

According to Vicki MacKinnon, who practices numerology — the study of the occult significance of numbers — Wednesday's date represents two energies merging, including masculine and feminine energies. MacKinnon, of Calgary, Alberta, author of "Please Take a Number: Numerology for Real Life and Everyday Success," said Tuesday that those kinds of energy are good news for couples planning to marry on 12-12-12. Among them are Assistant U.S. Attorney Amy Johnson and Deputy U.S. Marshal Brian Allen.

A federal judge in Pittsburgh will marry the couple at 12:12 p.m. as they exchange 12-word vows.

Johnson, 34, said the cou-



Producers David Saltzman, left, and John Sykes speak to the media and pose for photographs as workers prepare Madison Square Garden for the "12-12-12" concert whose proceeds will aid the victims of Superstorm Sandy, Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2012, in New York.

(AP Photo/John Minchillo)

ple had been planning a small ceremony until word leaked out of their numerically unusual plans.

"A lot of people started thinking it was interesting and intriguing that we chose this day. Prior to that

it was going to be a very small venture, but it's kind of spiraled into something," Johnson said.

Officials at the Milwaukee County Courthouse also expect the hallways to be bustling with brides and grooms. At least 27 couples are getting hitched on the 12th day of the 12th month of 2012, compared with about six on a typical Wednesday. In Las Vegas, MGM Resorts spokeswoman Yvette Monet says all six of the casino wedding chapels the company has along the strip are close to fully booked for Wednesday. But weddings aside, MacKinnon, said her reading of the date shows good fortune can come to anyone who demonstrates good intentions in whatever they do on 12-12-12.

"I just believe that as long as we conduct our lives with the highest intentions for ourselves and others, we can make very good use of the energy tomorrow for manifestation of what we want to bring into our lives." □

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Baskin-Robbins	Buy 1 Scoop & Get a 2nd Scoop Half Price – 6pm - close
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Divi Logo Store	FREE Bag Tag with purchase 2pm - 10pm
Dunkin Donuts	2 FREE Donuts with purchase of Latte, Cappuccino or Espresso 6pm - close
Fusion	Happy Hour Dollar to Florin prices on selected items plus FREE BBQ snacks 7pm - 9pm
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J.M.R. Store	Discounts on Select Items • 6pm-10pm
Juan Valdez Coffee	Buy 1 Granizado, Get 1 FREE 6pm - 10pm
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CASINO AND SHOPS

Michigan Governor Snyder signs law limiting unions

JEFF KAROUR

JOHN FLESHER

Associated Press

LANSING, Michigan (AP) —

Michigan Gov. Rick Snyder signed two laws Tuesday weakening union power, dealing a devastating and once-unthinkable defeat to organized labor in a state that has been a cradle of the labor movement for generations.

The House passed the anti-

union bills Tuesday as hundreds of protesters shouted "shame on you" from the gallery and huge crowds of labor backers massed in the state Capitol halls and on the grounds. Gov. Rick Snyder says he will sign the laws — one dealing with private sector workers, the other with government employees — as early as Wednesday.

Foes of the laws, including



Protester Paula Merwin, of Leslie, Mich., stands with an American flag outside the George W. Romney State Building, where Gov. Snyder has an office in Lansing, Mich., Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2012. Snyder signed two laws Tuesday weakening union power, dealing a devastating and once-unthinkable defeat to organized labor in a state that has been a cradle of the labor movement for generations.

(AP Photo/Paul Sancya)

The Greatest Tree of them all



By: Roland W. Peterson

The big containers roll by
The ground shakes
My roots tremble
My leaves shiver
I know what they contain
Again it is those trees that cannot bend and give no shade
It is Xmas time

I am standing here all alone
The steady trade wind has bend my back
But I am standing firm

I have served my people
For the longest time
They gather in my shade to rest
They play cards and domino in my shade
They repair cars in my shade
They sell fish in my shade
They gossip in my shade
They make tables out of me

But now that it is Xmas time
They bring in trees that cannot bend and give no shade
They decorate them and place gifts under them
Those trees that cannot bend and give no shade

I am standing here alone
Every one is so busy
No one sees me
They look pass me
No one appreciates me
They take me for granted
My back aches
But I am standing firm

I have solace in knowing
That after the Xmas season
Those trees that cannot bend
And give no shade
Will be thrown away
But I...I will be standing here ready to serve my people

Oh...how beautiful it will be
To put some gifts under me
To put a little light bulb in my crown
And say Thank you ...thank you
You majestic Quihi tree
For you are the greatest forever to be.

President Barack Obama, are trying to keep the spotlight on this latest battleground in the war over union rights. Democrats offered a series of amendments, one of which would have allowed a statewide referendum. All were swiftly rejected.

"This is the nuclear option," Democratic Rep. Doug Geiss. "This is the most divisive issue that we have had to deal with. And this will have repercussions. And it will have personal hard feelings after this is all said and done."

Once the bills are enacted, it will mark another defeat for the labor movement in the industrial Great Lakes

region, known as the Rust Belt for its once-booming manufacturing sector. Michigan, the center of the U.S. auto industry, will become the 24th right-to-work state, banning requirements that nonunion employees pay unions for negotiating contracts and other services.

Supporters say the laws give workers more choice and support economic growth, but critics insist the real intent is to weaken organized labor by encouraging workers to "free-load" by withholding money unions need to bargain effectively with management.

"This is about freedom, fair-

ness and equality," Republican House Speaker Jase Bolger said. "These are basic American rights — rights that should unite us."

In recent years, legislatures in states like Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin have been taken over by an aggressive Republican majority that vowed to curtail union rights. Even with the outcome considered a foregone conclusion, the heated battle showed no sign of cooling as lawmakers prepared to cast final votes. Hundreds of protesters flooded the state Capitol hours before the House and Senate convened, chanting and whistling in the chilly darkness. □

Obama, Boehner talk on fiscal cliff

JIM KUHNHENN

STEVEN R. HURST

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) —

President Barack Obama and House Speaker John Boehner spoke on the telephone early Tuesday evening to discuss how to pull the U.S. economy back from the Jan. 1 "fiscal cliff" that would trigger a combination of tax increases and spending cuts that could push the country back into economic recession, administration and congressional officials said.

The conversation occurred after both sides exchanged new proposals on how to avoid looming fiscal cliff. Obama and Boehner met Sunday at the White House. The White House then offered a new proposal lowering its proposed figure for tax revenue from \$1.6 trillion to \$1.4 trillion. Boehner offered a Republican counter proposal on Tuesday.

While Tuesday's phone conversation and the exchange of offers indicated stepped up activity, it was

unclear whether the talks were resulting in real progress.

Both sides have laid out positions unacceptable to the other, a common bargaining tactic, but they are showing no real signs of giving ground with less than three weeks remaining before the deadline. Obama campaigned on raising income tax rates on the wealthiest Americans, to which Republicans object, and insists on that as a path to reducing the country's spiraling budget deficit. □

Police suspect man was lured into NYC ambush

TOM HAYS
Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Someone wanted Brandon Lincoln Woodard dead — bad enough to apparently lure him to a midtown Manhattan block for what looked like a professional hit. But who shot Woodard in the back of the head and why remained a mystery on Tuesday as police studied security videotape of the unidentified gunman and delved into Woodard's checkered past for clues.

The brazen slaying of a 31-year-old visitor from Los Angeles "certainly appears to have been planned," Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly told reporters.

Based on the videotape, New York Police Department detectives suspect Woodard was lured into the Monday afternoon ambush shortly after he checked out of a hotel on nearby Columbus Circle, Kelly said. The killer had arrived at least 30 minutes before the gunfire erupted in a normally safe neighborhood teeming with car and pedestrian traffic. The man, who appears to be bald and have a beard, could be seen exiting the passenger side of a parked Lincoln sedan and pacing as he waited, police said.

After Woodard got there,

he checked his phone and walked back and forth as if looking for an address, police said. When the shooter approached, Woodard



Brandon Lincoln Woodard, 31, was shot in the head Monday, Dec. 10, 2012, in the New York City borough of Manhattan, in what police suspect is a professional killing.

(AP Photo)

appeared to look back at him for a split second. He looked away again after "showing no sign of recognition," Kelly said.

A security photo — released to seek the public's help in identifying the gunman — shows him reaching into his pocket for a pistol moments before he fired a single deadly round.

Afterward, the shooter left Woodard in a pool of blood on the sidewalk, slipped into the same Lincoln sedan and was driven away. Ballistics evidence pointed to a possible lead: The 9mm

semiautomatic used to kill Woodard was the same weapon used to last month to shoot up the outside of a home in Queens where nobody was hurt. Police also recovered two phones carried by the victim.

Investigators were still trying to determine what Woodard — who checked into his hotel on Sunday after flying in from California on a one-way ticket — was doing in the city. Kelly said he has been described as a promoter but had no further details. Kelly declined to comment on news reports that Woodard's mother ran a mortgage business in California that was mired in litigation and other troubles.

Authorities in Los Angeles and Las Vegas confirmed

that Woodard had a history of run-ins with the law in both places.

Woodard had been due back in court on Jan. 22 following his arrest by LA County sheriff's deputies in West Hollywood in April on a felony cocaine possession charge. He had previously pleaded not guilty. Court records show that in December 2009, Woodard pleaded no contest in the Los Angeles suburb of Torrance to a misdemeanor charge of hit-and-run driving. He was sentenced to three years of probation and a day in jail. However, his probation was terminated in January 2011.

In 2008, he pleaded no contest to two misdemeanor charges of grand theft of property. □



This still image shows the gunman, left, behind Brandon Lincoln Woodard pulling the weapon from his jacket pocket a moment before the shooting, Mon. Dec. 10, 2012 in New York.

(AP Photo)

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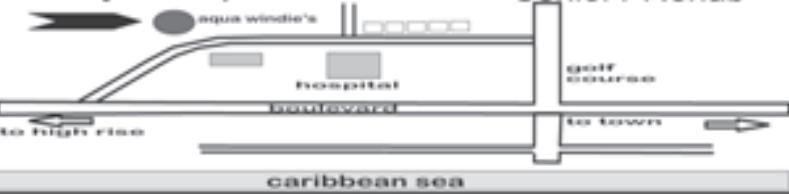
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Man gets 10 years in suicide-bomber plot

MICHAEL TARM
Associated Press

CHICAGO (AP) — A man who pleaded guilty to a plot to attend a Somalia training camp with the dream of becoming a suicide bomber was sentenced Tuesday to nearly 10 years in prison. Standing in orange jail

clothes, his hands behind his back, 29-year-old Shaker Masri looked calm as a judge imposed the sentence for one count of attempting to provide material support and resources to a terrorist group.

"That you were willing to die in harming others is extremely disturbing to this

court," U.S. District Judge Sharon Johnson Coleman told him. "There is a need to deter you, people such as Mr. Masri, from this type of behavior."

Masri — who was born in Alabama but has close family ties to Syria — allegedly talked with an informant about killing a busload of

U.S. soldiers and learning how to strap on a belt-full of explosives. He also allegedly spoke about "heavenly rewards one would receive for martyrdom," according to a government presentencing filing.

"Masri's goal was to be a tool of indiscriminate murder," the same filing said.

Masri was arrested in August 2010 hours before he was scheduled to leave the country for a trip to Somalia, where he hoped to become a suicide bomber for al-Qaida and another terrorist group, al-Shabab, prosecutors have said. He had allegedly started talking to a confidential FBI informant of his plans a little more than two weeks before his arrest.

After his arrest, investigators found a copy of Osama bin Laden's manifesto, "The Declaration of War Against the Americans" on his computer as well as the book "The Islamic Ruling on the Permissibility of Self-Sacrificial Operations: Suicide or



This undated file photo provided by the U.S. Marshals Service shows Shaker Masri, 29, of Chicago. (AP Photo)

Martyrdom?"

Masri allegedly admired Anwar al-Awlaki, a U.S.-born cleric believed to have inspired the 2009 Fort Hood, Texas, shootings and the attempted bombing of a jetliner approaching Detroit on Christmas Day in 2009. A U.S. drone attack killed al-Awlaki last year. □

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US defends \$1.9B deal with British banking giant

CHRISTINA REXRODE

LARRY NEUMEISTER

Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — American authorities on Tuesday cited “astonishing” dysfunction at the British bank HSBC and said that it had helped Mexican drug traffickers, Iran, Libya and others under U.S. suspicion or sanction to move money around the world.

HSBC agreed to pay \$1.9 billion, the largest penalty ever imposed on a bank.

The U.S. stopped short of charging executives, citing the bank's immediate, full cooperation and the damage that an assault on the company might cause on economies and people, including thousands who would lose jobs if the bank collapsed.

Outside experts said it was evidence that a doctrine of “too big to fail,” or at least “too big to prosecute,” was alive and well four years after the financial crisis.

The settlement avoided a legal battle that could



Lanny Breuer, center, Assistant Attorney General of the Justice Department's Criminal Division, addresses a news conference in Brooklyn, N.Y., Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2012. British bank HSBC has agreed to pay \$1.9 billion to settle a New York based-probe in connection with the laundering of money from narcotics traffickers in Mexico, U.S. authorities announced Tuesday. Among those joining Breuer is Treasury Under Secretary David Cohen, left.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

have further savaged the bank's reputation and undermined confidence in the banking system. HSBC does business in almost 80 countries, so many that it calls itself “the world's local bank.”

Lanny A. Breuer, assistant attorney general of the Justice Department's criminal division, cited a “stun-

ning, stunning failure” by the bank to monitor itself. He said that it enabled countries subject to U.S. sanction — Cuba, Iran, Libya, Myanmar and Sudan

— to move about \$660 million in prohibited transactions through U.S. financial institutions, including HSBC, from the mid-1990s through September 2006. □



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Obama: U.S. recognizes Syria's main rebel group

MATTHEW LEE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Barack Obama declared Syria's main opposition group the sole "legitimate representative" of its country's people Tuesday, deeming the move "a big step" in the international diplomatic efforts to end Syrian President Bashar Assad's embattled regime. Obama said the newly formed Syrian Opposition Council "is now inclusive enough" to be granted the elevated status, which paves the way for the greater U.S. support for the organization. "Obviously, with that recognition comes responsibilities," Obama said in an interview Tuesday with ABC News. "To make sure that they organize themselves effectively, that they are representative of all the parties, that they commit themselves to a political transition that respects women's rights and minority rights."

Recognition of the council as the sole representative of Syria's diverse population brings the U.S. in line with Britain, France and several of America's Arab allies, which took the same step shortly after the body was created at a meeting of opposition representatives in Qatar last month.

Obama's announcement follows his administration's blacklisting of a militant Syrian rebel group with links to al-Qaida. That step is aimed at blunting the influence of extremists amid fears that the regime may use or lose control of its stockpile of chemical weapons.

Defense Secretary Leon Panetta said Tuesday that the Syrian government seems to have slowed preparations for the possible use of chemical weapons against rebel forces. Last week, U.S. officials said there was evidence that Syrian forces had begun preparing sarin, a nerve agent, for possible use in bombs.

"At this point the intelligence has really kind of leveled off," Panetta told reporters traveling with him to Kuwait, where he will visit U.S. troops at the start of a four-day trip. "We haven't seen anything new indicating any aggressive steps to move forward in that way."

U.S. recognition of the opposition council is expected to be a centerpiece of an international conference on the Syria crisis in Morocco this week. □

Steps toward recovery in a community still vacated

PETER APPLEGATE

© 2012 New York Times

ORTLEY BEACH, N.J. — Gone is the smell of gas from fractured pipes that hung eerily in the air when rescue workers first arrived. But what you see now is not much better — the buildings knocked down or ripped open like stage sets, the endless mounds of junked

dunes in town. Virtually every one was damaged by the storm. About 10 percent were destroyed. But six weeks after Hurricane Sandy sent cascades of seawater roaring through local streets, Mike Pedano, a contractor who knows enough about building to believe only what his eyes tell



Mike Pedano, a contractor, holds photos of the beach house that he and his cousin built, which was damaged by Hurricane Sandy, in Ortley Beach, N.J. Six weeks after Hurricane Sandy sent cascades of seawater roaring through local streets, residents in areas like Ortley Beach that were hit by Sandy are slowly recovering.

(Todd Heisler/The New

refrigerators, soaked insulation and shattered glass. There is no electricity, gas service or drinkable water. No one is back home and no business is operating. There are about 2,400 resi-

him, looked around and thought, Well, so far, so good.

Wayward houses, boats and downed power lines had been dislodged from streets. A tractor sat atop

a 50-foot-high mountain of sand that is part of the beach and dune rebuilding. Ortley Beach will be shut down four days this week for gas service restoration, which could happen by the end of the month for houses structurally sound enough. More than 200 loads of debris, 100 cubic yards each, had been hauled away.

"We were told this was all going to be closed down for eight to 10 months," said Pedano, 55, known around town as Uncle Mike, who was within a week or two of completing a two-family beach house for himself and his cousin, Pete Rizzuto, when the storm wrecked the first floor but left it standing. "They're moving faster than Grant took Richmond."

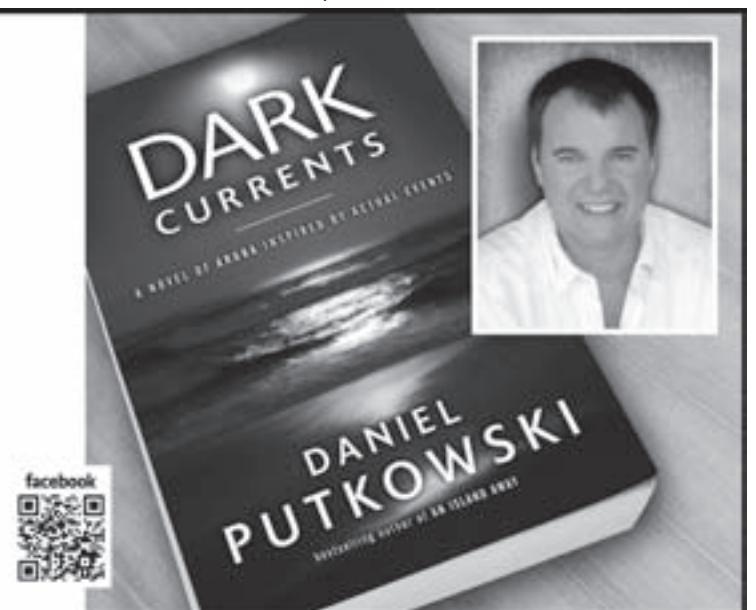
But while progress on the infrastructure has been significant, residents have been allowed home for only a few days. Restoration, thus, has come in baby steps — at least for those with homes left to restore.

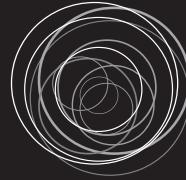
So the trucks and vans with the stickers that allow access to the island — Chicago Water and Fire Restoration, Samaritan's Purse Disaster Relief, Lombardo's Roofing and Exteriors — tell the tale. □

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Extremists among Syrian rebels who seized base

BASSEM MROUE

Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian rebels including Islamic extremists took full control of a sprawling military base Tuesday after a bloody two-day battle that killed 35 soldiers, activists said. It was the latest gain by opposition forces bolstered by an al-Qaida-linked group that has provided skilled fighters but raised concerns in the West. The Sheik Suleiman military base was the second major base captured in the north by the rebels, who also are making inroads farther south toward the capital, Damascus.

In other violence, dozens of people were reported injured or killed in Aqrab, a village in central Hama province, in a series of explosions. The Britain-based

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported the bloodshed, citing activists in the area, but had no immediate death toll or details on who was to blame. Fighters from jihadi groups, including Jabhat al-Nusra, were among those doing battle in the rebel ranks as they took control of Sheik Suleiman base, near the northern city of Aleppo, according to the Observatory and other activists. The presence of the jihadi groups has raised concerns in the U.S. and other nations that are supporting the opposition in Syria but do not want to see extremists gain power in the region. The U.S. this week blacklisted al-Nusra as a foreign terrorist organization and said the group was part of al-Qaida in

Iraq. But al-Nusra fighters appear to be among the most effective fighting forces on the rebel side, spearheading many of the

recent gains. The U.S. terror designation freezes any assets members of al-Nusra may have in U.S. jurisdictions and bars Americans

from providing the group with material support. It's largely symbolic because the group is not thought to have holdings or support in the United States, but officials hope the penalties will encourage others to take similar action and discourage Syrians from joining. The administration took further action Tuesday against extremists on both sides, with the Treasury Department setting separate sanctions against two senior al-Nusra leaders and two militant groups operating under the control of Syrian President Bashar Assad's government. Two commanders of the pro-regime shabiha force also were targeted. "We will target the pro-Assad militias just as we will the terrorists who falsely cloak themselves in the flag of the legitimate opposition," said David S. Cohen, the department's sanctions chief. Western officials have raised concerns that an increasingly desperate Assad might unleash his chemical weapons stockpiles against rebels in an act of desperation. □



A Free Syrian Army fighter walks over the ruins of a building bombed by a Syrian Army jet in Fafeen village, north of Aleppo province, Syria, Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2012. Syrian rebels including Islamic extremists took full control of a sprawling military base Tuesday after a bloody two-day battle that killed dozens of soldiers, activists said. It was the latest gain by opposition forces bolstered by an al-Qaida-linked group that has provided skilled fighters but raised concerns in the West.

(AP Photo/Manu Brabo)

Belfast leaders decry petrol-bomb attack

SHAWN POGATCHNIK

Associated Press

DUBLIN (AP) — Leaders from across Northern Ireland appealed Tuesday for a week of angry, illegal Protestant street protests to end after a gang surrounded a policewoman's car and hurled a Molotov cocktail inside.

Police said the officer wasn't wounded because the car didn't catch on fire, but about 40 other police have been hurt during the past week of street clashes, driving away tourism and soiling Northern Ireland's image as a land at peace. Extremists from the British Protestant majority have turned out in force, blocking roads across Belfast and several suburbs ever since Belfast City Council voted Dec. 3 to stop flying the British flag year-round.

Road blockades in some



A burnt out car still smolders in Belfast after loyalists protesters clashed with police as they protested against new restrictions on flying the Union flag. Eight police officers were injured and more than a dozen people arrested during overnight clashes between loyalists and riot police.

(AP Photo / Paul Faith, PA)

Protestant parts of Belfast resumed Tuesday night, despite warnings from politicians and police chiefs that someone would be killed if the trouble continued. The politician at the center of the storm, Alliance Party deputy leader Naomi Long, accused the protesters of seeking to impose "mob rule" on North-

Ireland, the part of the island that remained in the United Kingdom when the predominantly Catholic rest of Ireland won independence in 1922. Death threats have forced Long, who represents Protestant east Belfast in British Parliament, to abandon her home and office. Protestant extremists blame her

small cross-community party for providing the council votes needed to approve a Catholic-backed motion removing the British flag from Belfast City Hall for all but 18 days a year. □

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Greece to announce bond buyback results

NICHOLAS PAPHITIS
Associated Press

ATHENS, Greece (AP) —

Greece will reveal the results of a key debt buyback deal Wednesday, after an extended deadline for private investors to decide whether they will sell back their Greek bond holdings at a discount expired without any official announcements.

Finance ministers from the 17 European Union countries that use the euro held a conference call late Tuesday on the deal, which is designed to ease Greece's crippling debt load and unlock vital rescue loans.

There were no comments after the call, and the Greek debt management agency said it would issue a statement on investor response early Wednesday. The deal offered attractive terms to foreign funds that had bought the Greek

bonds at rock bottom prices during the worst period of the financial crisis and now stand to make a hefty profit. Greece's cash-starved banks, which own more than €15 billion worth of the bonds, had little op-

percent higher, on expectations that the deal would succeed. The country's international bailout creditors — fellow eurozone countries and the International Monetary Fund — had demanded the buyback as



Athenians walk past a central Athens branch of National Bank of Greece, the country's largest lender, Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2012. (AP Photo/Petros Giannakouris)

tion other than to sign up as they depend on government rescue loans.

Greece's main stock index rallied Tuesday, closing 2.3

one of the conditions for paying out a long-delayed installment in rescue loans. If the buyback goes well, eurozone officials will approve

Thursday the disbursement of €34 billion. The money is earmarked to boost domestic lenders and pay some of the government's mounting bills to state suppliers. Debt-crippled Greece has depended on international rescue loans for the past two and a half years, after it admitted its budget deficit was more than three times the initial forecast and swiftly lost access global bond markets. In exchange for the funds, the government repeatedly slashed incomes and raised taxes to tame the deficit — but in the process created widespread public resentment. That is expected to increase with the submission to Parliament Friday of a new tax bill incorporating many of Greece's latest austerity commitments, including a 15 percent tax on bank deposit earnings. □

Pressure grows for El Salvador over massacre

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — Rights groups are calling on El Salvador to investigate the 1981 army massacre of about 1,000 people at El Mozote. Judiciary officials say cases could be opened despite a 1980s amnesty law. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights says El Salvador should reopen its investigation into the civil war-era massacre, and pay restitution to the victims' relatives. Chief Justice Martin Rogel of the country's third circuit court says a judge could "declare the amnesty law does not apply" to the case, if prosecutors were to bring charges for crimes against humanity. El Salvador's Foreign Ministry said in a statement Tuesday it recognizes the Inter-American court's ruling and noting "the victims and their families have the right to moral and economic reparation." □

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Kazakh guard sentenced in fifteen deaths

ANDREW ROTH

© 2012 New York Times

MOSCOW — A military court in a remote city in eastern Kazakhstan sentenced a 20-year-old border guard to life in prison Tuesday over the killing of 15 people, in a case that has drawn widespread skepticism of the authorities in the former Soviet state.

In May, 14 soldiers and a gamekeeper were killed in Arkankergen, in a mountain range on the Chinese border, and the soldiers' outpost was burned. A few days later, the surviving young guard, Vladislav Chelakh, was found hiding nearby. Investigators said he confessed; prosecutors said he had been hazed. However, the young man eventually said that investigators had threatened to torture him if he did not confess, and that smugglers had carried out the killings. □

OPEC considers oil output, Iran-Saudi rivalry

GEORGE JAHN
Associated Press

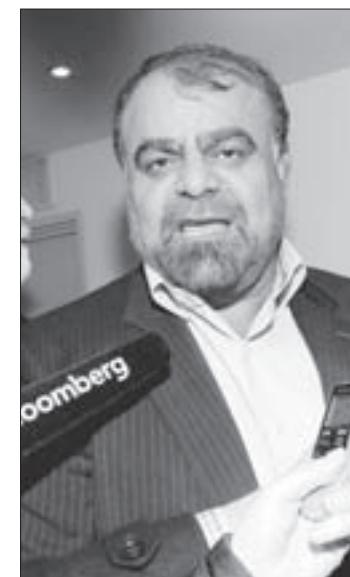
VIENNA (AP) — Tough decisions await OPEC oil ministers sitting down this week for a policy meeting. The 12-nation cartel has to deal not only with how much crude to produce for the next few months but must also fill a senior position coveted both by Saudi Arabia and archrival Iran. With world supplies ample, there is some rationale for curbing output when the ministers meet Wednesday in Vienna. Oil inventories in the major industrialized countries are high, with an energy boom in the United States resulting in stocks of oil at their most plentiful there since 2008. Meanwhile, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is pushing out over 31 million barrels a day. That's substantially more than its official daily ceiling of 30 million barrels and the highest in four years, when calculated

over a year. But other factors suggest there may be no change.

The world economy remains weak, despite some signs of a halting recovery in the United States and a bottoming out in the downturn in China. Reducing output now would spike prices, endangering the fragile recovery and further cutting back on the world's oil consumption.

Then there is the "fiscal cliff." The U.S. risks slipping into recession if hundreds of billions of dollars in expiring tax cuts and automatic spending reductions take effect on Jan. 1. Mideast tensions focused on Syria, Israel and the Palestinians and Iran's nuclear program could also drive up prices, even without any OPEC cutbacks. As always, the price of a barrel of crude is likely to be the main decider. The average cost of the group's oil basket — a mix of grades produced by OPEC countries — has

been above \$100 a barrel for the last two years — a first in OPEC's history. Brent crude, which is used to price international variet-



Iran's Minister of Petroleum Rostam Ghasemi arrives at a hotel for a meeting of OPEC, in Vienna, Austria, Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2012.

(AP Photo/Ronald Zak)

ies of oil, has also been well over \$100 a barrel for this year. That price appears to be in the comfort zone

of most OPEC member nations, and comments ahead of the meeting by some oil ministers suggest that the OPEC meeting might settle for the status quo in production Wednesday, while urging members to stop exceeding their individual output quotas. "As long as there is demand for crude oil, there is no need to do anything," United Arab Emirates Energy Minister Mohamed bin Dhaen Al Hamli told reporters on Tuesday, while Iranian oil minister Rostam Ghasemi described the status quo as "good right now." "There is no expectation of any sort of action that would restrain supply coming out of the Vienna gathering," said John Kingston, an analyst at energy and metals information provider Platts. Jason Schenker of Prestige Economics noted that prices are at levels "OPEC ministers have described as 'fair,' 'sustainable,' 'reasonable,' etc." □

Special Holiday Menus



Special Lunch Menu

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Empanada Argentina
Or
Caesar Salad

Entrée
Skirt Steak
Or
Seafood Skewer,

Dessert
Sorbet
Or
Flan

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Sundays from 11:30 till 7:00pm

The Christmas Menu

Appetizer
Empanada Argentina
Or
Cream of Broccoli Soup
Or
Ajaca Navidenja

Entrée
Fresh fillet of Grouper
Pan fried and served with garlic & herb butter sauce
Or
Grilled Skirt Steak

Dessert
Sweet Sampler
A combination of Mini Flan, Crepe with Dulce de Leche and Chocolate Brownie
Fresh Brewed Coffee or assorted Tea

\$33.00
plus 15% s.c & tx

The Noel Menu

Appetizer
Chorizo & Morcilla
Or
Cream of Pumpkin Soup
Or
Ajaca Navidenja

Entrée
Seafood Trio
A combination platter of Fish Filler, Garlic Shrimp & Stewed Squid Buenos Aires
Or
Premium cut, 8 oz Tenderloin Steak

Dessert
Sweet Sampler
A combination of Mini Flan, Crepe with Dulce de Leche and Chocolate Brownie
Fresh Brewed Coffee or assorted Tea

\$35.00
plus 15% s.c & tx

Santa's Menu

Appetizer
Conch Harbor Style
Or
Chilled Shrimp Cocktail
Or
Ajaca Navidenja

Entrée
Surf & Turf
8 oz Tenderloin Steak with 2 Jumbo Garlic Shrimp
Or
Parrilla Argentina
A combination of five different cuts of beef

Dessert
Sweet Sampler
A combination of Mini Flan, Crepe with Dulce de Leche and Chocolate Brownie
Fresh Brewed Coffee or assorted Tea

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The Star Bright Menu

Appetizer
The classic Caesar Salad
Or
Sautred Jumbo Garlic Shrimp
Or
Ajaca Navidenja

Entrée
Grilled Veal Chop marinated in chimichurri herbs
Or
Filet of Norwegian Salmon, with homemade herb & lemon butter
Or
Our world famous Gaucho Steak

Dessert
Sweet Sampler
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Venezuela: Doctors optimistic about Chavez

IAN JAMES
Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP)

— Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez was preparing to undergo a new cancer surgery on Tuesday in Cuba, his government said, after his illness reappeared despite a year and a half of surgeries and treatments. Venezuela's government said in a statement that Chavez's medical team had begun "pre-operative protocol" to carry out the surgery on Tuesday.

"His medical team has transmitted its optimism about the success of this operation," the government said in the statement, which Information Minister Ernesto Villegas read on television. He said the government called on Venezuelans to "remain united in prayer." Venezuela released the statement after Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa said Chavez was undergoing the operation "at this moment."

"It's a very delicate operation," Correa said at an event in the Ecuadorean city of Tulcan.

"He's passing through one of the hardest moments of his life. Our heart and our

solidarity are with a historic president," he said. Correa, a close ally of the socialist leader, traveled to Cuba on Monday to meet

continue on with his leftist movement.

In recent days, groups of supporters have gathered to pray for Chavez in Vene-



Cuba's President Raul Castro, right, receives Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez at the Jose Marti International airport in Havana, Cuba, Monday, Dec. 10, 2012.

(AP Photo/Granma)

with Chavez.

The Venezuelan president announced on Saturday that he needed to undergo a fourth cancer-related surgery after tests showed that "some malignant cells" had reappeared in the same area in his pelvic region where tumors were previously removed.

Chavez also said for the first time that if his illness cuts short his presidency, Vice President Nicolas Maduro should take his place and be elected president to

zuela and elsewhere. In Bolivia, American actor Sean Penn joined a candlelight vigil on Monday wearing a track suit emblazoned with the colors of Venezuela's flag, just like one that Chavez has worn.

"He is one of the most important forces we've had on this planet. And I will wish him nothing but that great strength he has shown over and over again," Penn told a crowd at the vigil, his voice quavering with emotion. □

Bolivia judges balk at setting New York businessman free

LA PAZ, Bolivia (AP) — A Bolivian appeals panel has refused to immediately release a New York businessman, despite evidence he was fleeced and extorted by prosecutors who have had him jailed for 18 months without charges on suspicion of money laundering. Instead, the two judges sent the case of Jacob Ostreicher back to the trial judge. They ordered her to reconsider favorable evidence she previously threw out at

the urging of an official who is now under arrest. Ostreicher's case led to the uncovering of a shake-down ring allegedly run by the No. 1 legal advisor in the Interior Ministry, and including two prosecutors. It came after actor Sean Penn interceded with President Evo Morales. Penn was at the hearing but did not comment. He has praised Morales' decisiveness in pursuing the ring. □

Brazil's Silva knew of cash-for-votes scam

SAO PAULO (AP) — A Brazilian newspaper says it had access to a businessman's testimony linking the nation's popular former president to a massive cash-for-votes corruption scheme. Brazil's top court found 25 people guilty in a landmark trial that ended recently. While top aides of former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva were found guilty, Silva himself was never implicated.

The Estado de S. Paulo

newspaper reports Tuesday that businessman Marcos Valerio, a key figure in the case, sought out prosecutors and gave them the testimony in September, after he was already found guilty. He was later sentenced to 40 years in prison. Valerio reportedly told them Silva knew and approved of the scheme, and used some of the cash involved for personal expenses.

Silva has denied knowing of the scheme. □

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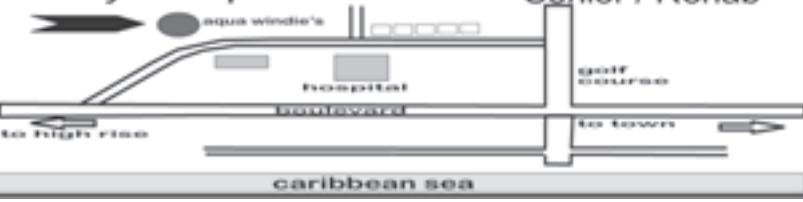
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ORANJESTAD- Aruba's tagline is "One Happy Island." Anyone who purchases a piece of that island at Blue Residences (www.bluearuba.com), scheduled for a winter 2013 opening, will certainly have a lot of reasons to feel happy. Beautiful beaches? Check. Spectacular views? Check. Luxury living? Check. Whole ownership with access to Preferred Residences[®] benefits? Check here, too.

The project encompasses 124 whole-ownership units in three eight-story towers, all with a panoramic view of the Caribbean and just a few steps from the beach. On-site amenities will include a clubhouse, pool, snack bar, mini market, landscaped sun-deck, fitness center, and full-service spa.

All purchasers receive a

complimentary membership in Preferred Residences and the extensive leisure and lifestyle benefits that entails. "Potential buyers know the Preferred Residences brand and recognize that standards will be kept high," says Alberto Perret Gentil, senior vice president and chief operating officer for Grupo Pering and project manager for Blue Residence.

Going Up

Now GrupoPering's second resort in Aruba after the beautiful Oceania Residences on Eagle Beach is becoming a reality. The first phase of construction is well underway on the 5-acre (2 hectares) site, which includes 84 units in two eight-story towers. Pre-sales began in 2011, and, in a little over a year, 45 had already sold. "We're very

pleased with sales," Perret Gentil says. "They've been even better than expected. That is why we decided to include the second tower as part of Phase 1."

Each tower will contain 24 two-bedroom, two-bath units (each measuring 1,023 square feet/95 square meters); 12 three-bedroom, three-bath units (1,617 square feet/150 square meters); four three-bedroom, four-bath penthouses (2,153 square feet/200 square meters) and two five-bedroom, five-and-a-half-bath penthouses (3,197 square feet/297 square meters). All the units are provided with Italian Kitchens (stainless steel stove, refrigerator, dishwasher and microwave), porcelain tiles, washer and dryers and assigned parking. Furniture packages are available to purchase in the most chic Italian styles. Enhanced Beach at walking distance will also be part of your piece of this "Happy Island".

The buildings will be Green, with energy-saver air conditioning and water system. Buyers have the option of purchasing a complete furniture and interior design package at the time



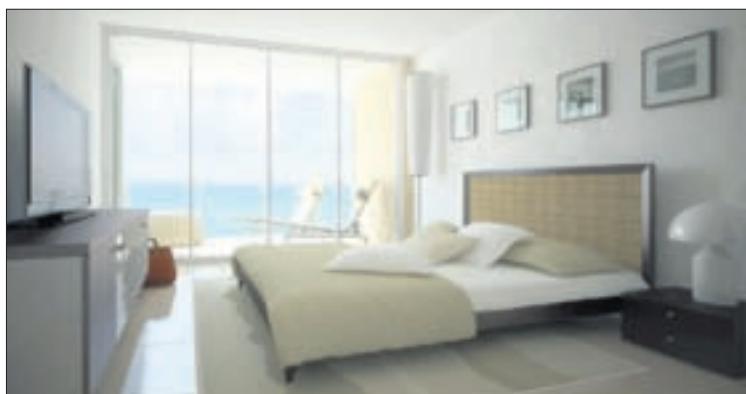
of sale. "Most owners want the luxury of the total package," Perret Gentil says. Adding to the project's allure is its location on Eagle Beach next to the Bubali Bird Sanctuary, which provides both great views and a quiet neighbor. Within walking distance is Palm Beach, a renowned 2-mile-longstrip that's home to

tions when we begin sales on phase two." Blue Residence is primarily targeting buyers from Venezuela and the northeast United States, but Perret Gentil sees other opportunities, too. "Lately, we have seen a big interest among Canadians, and we also hope to target Brazilians." The Preferred Residences affiliation has



high-rise luxury hotels and dotted by water sports concessions, piers, bars, restaurants, and shops. Minutes away, golfers can play a round at a Robert Trent Jones II championship course. A third tower and a second pool are planned for phase two, which may contain 40 additional units, Perret Gentil says. "We're going to make the decision based on market condi-

helped with sales. "Our buyers value the opportunity of exchanging their property for another vacation destination around the world and the many ways the program helps them maximize the use of their leisure time," Perret Gentil says, adding that the program "delivers a rich menu of benefits and services that will enrich our owners' lives for years to come." □



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Gaita Las Unicas at The Shops At Alhambra Mall!

PUNTA BRABO-"The Shops At Alhambra Mall " invites the Aruba community and visitors for its next family night which will take place this coming Wednesday, December 12. The entire family can shop for the year-end season and take advantage of the many discounts in our stores. To keep the whole family satisfied, our food court has the world famous fast-food restaurants like Sub-Way, Dunkin' Donuts, Baskin-Robins, and Little Ceasars, each with their own specials. If you are a roast food fan you must visit The Market, offering half roast chicken and ribs at special prices. Enjoy the best coffee at Juan Valdez offering also 2 for 1 granizado.



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On The Beach

Diana
and
Anabela

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Aruba Aloe, R-Glass, Lazy Lizard, Mermaid y Divi Logo Store and Alelina have a free gift with purchase. J.M.R. also has a selection of items on discount. Relax on a massage chair

at Intermezzo -The Salon from 6pm to 9pm. It is too much to mention, so come one, come all to The Shops at Alhambra this coming Wednesday. And to bring the Christmas and New Year feeling and spirit, as the beautiful ladies of Gaita Las Unicas will be present to delight all present with 'aginaldo' music from 6-10pm. So don't forget to bring the entire family this Wednesday December 12 at The Shops at Alhambra Mall for a joyful night with lots of surprises! □

At Papillon on December 16:

Go for Santa-licious and let your bells jingle!

PALM BEACH-Let your bells jingle, let your fancy take a Christmassy flight and ride the sleigh of culinary delights during Papillon Restaurant's Sunday Brunch. Held on December 16 only, this brunch is a 'swinging à la carte' affair, which means that you can start with dessert and double back to breakfast, meanwhile sampling appetizers and main courses. Of course you can also do it the 'normal' way; whatever you like. Anyway, you can jingle your bells up and down, from left to right. Papillon, located across from the Radisson Resort, is offering delicious options during its Christmassy brunch. Your start is with



a mimosa, juice, coffee or tea and then the feast starts. Breakfast consists of French toast, eggs benedict and/or a spinach omelette, followed by a vichyssoise, a goat cheese salad, a carpaccio or a crab cake. The main courses are ho-ho-ho great: canard à l'orange, grouper Papillon, Boeuf Bourguignon or aji shrimp. Dessert is an oasis of delights with a chocolate mousse, crème

brûlée or a Dame Blanche. Of course all your choices will have undergone the Papillon touch, which means that a good dose of culinary Santa creativity goes into the dishes. The plates look lovely, the service is superb and the food is Santa-licious good, so don't wait too long and make your reservations at Papillon at 586-5400 for the Super Christmassy Sunday Brunch.□

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The Gold Mine Ranch Earns 2012 Tripadvisor Certificate of Excellence



ORANJESTAD-The Gold Mine Ranch Horseback Riding Tours is proud to announce that they have received a Tripadvisor Certificate of Excellence award. The Tripadvisor Certificate of Excellence is an award for hospitality excellence, given only to establishments that consistently achieve outstanding traveler reviews on Tripadvisor.com, the world's largest travel site. Only 10 percent of listed businesses world-

wide receive this prestigious award, if they qualify, by maintaining an overall rating of four or higher out of a possible five, in reviews submitted by travelers on Tripadvisor. The Gold Mine Ranch is rated a five star attraction, ranked at #3 in Aruba out of a list of 75 attractions.

The Gold Mine Ranch is honored to receive the Tripadvisor Certificate of Excellence award for the year 2012. "It is with great pride that

we accept this award. Our family and staff work with great motivation, dedication and perseverance to be the best horseback riding ranch on Aruba"-Jay Dijkhoff. The Gold Mine Ranch is a family operated company that aims to provide the best service to guests. The Ranch provides horseback adventure trail rides on well-trained horses covering over 7 panoramic views, including beaches.

As a plus they are the only ranch in Aruba that offers rides to the Hidden Valley & Lagoon and the Indian trail, sites that can only be seen while on horseback. It's no wonder that many guests agree that The Gold Mine Ranch has been the highlight of their vacation on review sites such as Tripadvisor.com.

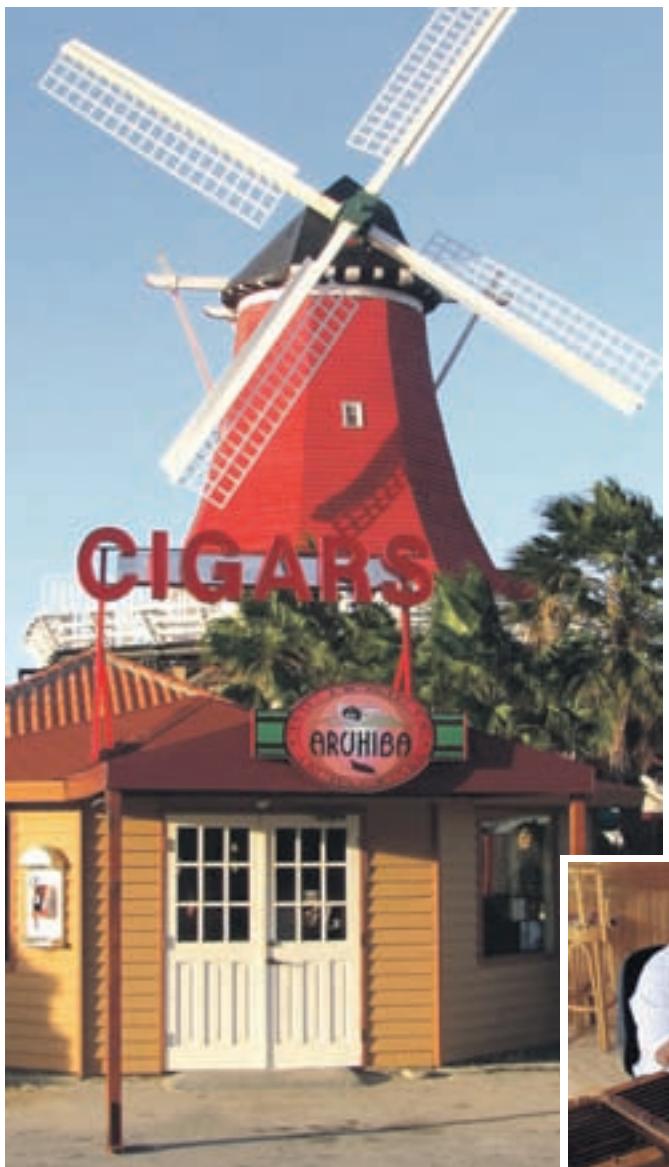
"We would like to thank all our guests who have supported us throughout the years and all our reviewers for taking the time to write



their candid comments on Tripadvisor. We are committed to our promise to provide exciting horseback adventures, not just trail rides. To all our guests, thank you for letting us be the highlight of your vacation". The Gold Mine Ranch is a family operated horse ranch that offers exciting horseback adventures in the North-east side of the island of Aruba, in the Caribbean. More than just trail rides, the Ranch offers group or private tours to small intimate groups on well trained horses & tailored to the needs or skills of each rider. Accommodations are possible for families, friends, couples as well as beginners through advanced riders. As the only ranch that offers rides passed over 7 panoramic views, and the only Ranch awarded for its superb service and hospitality, many regard the Gold Mine Ranch as the 'highlight of their vacation'. For more information visit [www.thegoldmineranch.com](http://thegoldmineranch.com). □

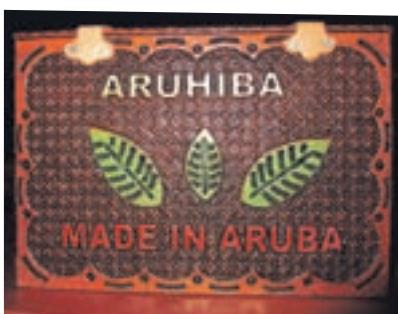
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ORANJESTAD- Benjamin Petrocchi, a true native Aruban started the newest export product of Aruba, locally produced hand rolled cigars called "Aruhiba". These cigars are produced and cultivated in Aruba. Petrocchi always had an interest in the cigar business and has also sold Premium Cuban Cigars, and now he is growing his own tobacco crops. After many attempts and trips to Santo Domingo and Cuba, he started his own production and cultivation of Aruhiba Cigars in Aruba. The whole process took him 10 years to perfect. Petrocchi's dedication to the cigars is important for the moulding and process of making a perfect cigar which takes a long time. Their handmade cigar box is specially designed with their "Aruhiba" logo. Petrocchi considers Aruhiba as a promotion for Aruba through its fine cigars. The company sells Aruhiba to the international markets as well. Visit their retail store located in front of the Historic Dutch Windmill in front of the Westin Resort, with any purchase of \$20 and up you receive a free "Aruhiba" cigar or ask for their gift box of 5 cigars get 1 FREE for only \$37. They open from Monday to Saturday from 9 am till 6:30 pm and on Sundays from 9 am to 1 pm. Aruhiba cigars are now available at the gift stores in your resort

and at well-known cigar stores. For their complete selection and attractive box prices visit their retail store. Tours are also available at their Tobacco farm where their cigars are grown and rolled.



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SPORTS

Aruba TODAY



This Sept. 9, 2012 file photo shows Serena Williams holding the championship trophy after beating Victoria Azarenka, of Belarus, in the championship match at the 2012 U.S. Open tennis tournament in New York.

Associated Press

S. Williams, Djokovic win ITF awards for 2012

LONDON (AP) — Novak Djokovic and Serena Williams are the International Tennis Federation's world champions for 2012.

Djokovic won the men's award Tuesday for the second straight year, while Williams took the honor for the third time in her career.

Djokovic won the Australian Open and was runner-up at the French Open and U.S. Open. He finished the season No. 1 in the ATP rankings with six tour titles. Williams won Wimbledon, the U.S. Open and the Olympic gold medal. She had a tour-best 58-4 record and seven titles.

American twins Bob and Mike Bryan were named men's doubles world champions for the ninth time in 10 years, while Sara Errani and Roberta Vinci of Italy took the women's doubles award.

Filip Peliwo of Canada and Taylor Townsend of the U.S. were named junior world champions. □

THE BRADY PUNCH

Brady throws 4 TDs, Patriots top Texans 42-14

New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady (12) reacts after running for yardage against the Houston Texans during the third quarter of an NFL football game in Foxborough, Mass., Monday, Dec. 10, 2012.

Associated Press

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This June 26, 2012 file photo shows Rafael Nadal of Spain returning a shot to Thomaz Bellucci of Brazil during a first round men's singles match at the All England Lawn Tennis Championships at Wimbledon, England.

Nadal confirms he'll return to action in Abu Dhabi exhibition

HAROLD HECKLE
Associated Press

MADRID (AP) — Rafael Nadal is ready to return to competitive tennis, confirming Tuesday that he'll play in an exhibition tournament in Abu Dhabi at the end of the month following a six-month break to recover from a knee injury. "Can't wait to get back on court in Abu Dhabi at the end of the month," the 11-time Grand Slam champion said on his Facebook page and Twitter account. "I won the Mubadala World Tennis Championship in 2010 and 2011 — would love to get my hands on the trophy again this year!" The 26-year-old Nadal began practicing on a court in his hometown of Manacor on the island of Mallorca on Nov. 20 under the supervision of his uncle and coach Tony Nadal and a physiotherapist. The Abu Dhabi

tournament starts Dec. 27 and will feature a six-man field that also includes top-ranked Novak Djokovic and No. 3 Andy Murray of Britain. While Nadal had long been scheduled to play in the event, he was cautious in a radio interview last week about how quickly he could return to full fitness after such a long layoff.

Nadal has not played since a stunning second-round loss to then 100th-ranked Lukas Rosol at Wimbledon in June due to the partial tear of a tendon in his left knee.

The injury denied Nadal an opportunity to defend the Olympic singles gold at the London Games and forced him to pull out of the U.S. Open and Spain's Davis Cup final against the Czech Republic, which his teammates lost without him last month. □

Lance Armstrong resisted subpoena, then wanted secrecy



In this Feb. 15, 2011, file photo, Lance Armstrong pauses during an interview in Austin, Texas.

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Lance Armstrong resisted turning over records sought by U.S. Postal Service investigators, and then tried to keep the inquiry under seal and out of the public eye, according to recently released court documents. In 2011, Postal Service officials investigating Armstrong and his teams for doping wanted records from his team management groups, financial statements, training journals and correspondence with former training consultant Michele Ferrari. He eventually complied with the subpoena but as recently as October was still asking the courts to keep the inquiry private. "They've been given everything they wanted and that they asked for ... months ago," Armstrong attorney Tim Herman said Tuesday. The Postal Service was Armstrong's main sponsor when he won the Tour de France from 1999-2004. The team was sponsored by the Discovery Channel for Armstrong's seventh victory in 2005. Armstrong was stripped of those titles this year. Last week, federal Magistrate Judge Deborah Robinson in Washington ordered the subpoena and Armstrong's efforts to keep it private released to the public. The judge rejected Armstrong's arguments that releasing the subpoena would violate the secrecy of the grand jury process or a pending whistleblower lawsuit filed against Armstrong by former teammate Floyd Landis. Armstrong was still the target of a federal criminal grand jury investigation into allegations of doping on the Postal Service teams when the subpoena was issued. That investigation was closed in February with no charges filed. The U.S. Anti-Doping Agency investigated Armstrong for doping and in August ordered him stripped of his seven Tour de France titles. In October, the agency released a massive report detailing performance-enhancing drug use by Armstrong and his teammates. The report included sworn statements from 11 former teammates, including Landis. Armstrong denies doping and insists he never cheated, but chose not to fight the USA-ADA charges. □

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AP source: Youkilis, Yankees reach 1-year deal

BEN WALKER
AP Baseball Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The New York Yankees reached a deal to sign former Boston Red Sox icon Kevin Youkilis on Tuesday, a person familiar with the negotiations told The Associated Press, filling New York's immediate need for a third baseman. The one-year contract for \$12 million is pending a physical. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because there was no official announcement.

Youkilis, a three-time All-Star and two-time World Series winner with Boston, is expected to play third base while Alex Rodriguez recovers from hip surgery. Rodriguez plans to have the surgery in mid-January and could be sidelined until the All-Star break or beyond.

For years, Youkilis was one of the more prominent faces in the fierce Red Sox-Yankees rivalry, and his intensity made him among the more popular players at Fenway Park. He and Yankees pitcher Joba Chamberlain had a feud that exemplified the ill will between the clubs, and now they're teammates.

Eric Chavez, the backup Yankees third baseman for most of last season, joined Arizona last week. New York considered several options as a stopgap at third, including Jeff Keppinger and Mark Reynolds, but both accepted deals with other teams. Youkilis turns 34 in March. He played third base and first base last season for Boston and Chicago White Sox. Youkilis was traded to the White Sox last



In this July 28, 2012, file photo, Chicago White Sox third baseman Kevin Youkilis (20) makes a play on the ball during a baseball game against the Texas Rangers in Arlington, Texas.

Associated Press

June as Boston's new management reshaped the Red Sox roster. He combined to

hit a career-low .235 with 19 home runs and 60 RBIs. An All-Star in 2008, 2009 and

2011, Youkilis won a Gold Glove at first base in 2007. He is a .283 hitter with 148 home runs in nine seasons, and was on Boston teams that won the World Series in 2004 and 2007.

With the Yankees, Youkilis could also play first base to give Mark Teixeira a break and could be the designated hitter. There is still uncertainty about when Rodriguez will return. He is a 14-time All-Star and baseball's priciest player, with his current overall contract worth \$275 million.

Rodriguez hit .272 with 18 home runs and 57 RBIs last season, and is fifth on the career homers list with 647. He slumped to .120 with zero RBIs in the playoffs, and was benched and replaced by a pinch hitter in key situations. □

NHL, union to return to bargaining, with mediators

TORONTO (AP) — NHL labor negotiations will resume Wednesday, with mediators rejoining the talks at an undisclosed location in an effort to save the hockey season.

The Canadian Press on Tuesday reported the restart of bargaining between the league and union, citing unidentified people on both sides of the lockout.

U.S. federal mediators Scot Beckenbaugh and John Sweeney are to return to the process. They took part in sessions Nov. 27 and 28 before deciding they couldn't help.

The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, based in Washington, also was involved during the lockout that canceled the 2004-05 NHL season, with Becken-

baugh attending sessions. As recently as last week, Commissioner Gary Bettman indicated he didn't think mediators would be able to help bridge the gap.

"We're not interested in mediation," he said Thursday. "We went through it a week and a half ago. It was of no value because of the position of the parties."

Tuesday marked the 87th day of the lockout. Wednesday's session will be the first meeting since the sides blamed each other after talks broke off last week.

Until then, they appeared to be making progress during three days in New York in which they exchanged proposals. Union executive director Donald Fehr maintains there are agreements

on almost all the important issues.

From the league's point of view, three main issues remain: the length of the collection bargaining agreement, rules governing term limits on contracts and the transition rules to help teams get under the salary cap.

There are also secondary issues yet to be agreed on, including the continued participation of NHL players in the Olympics, the international calendar and drug-testing rules.

In all, more than 40 percent of the regular season that was scheduled to begin Oct. 11 has been scratched.

The NHL eliminated 16 more days from the regular-season schedule Monday, can-



In this file photo taken Dec. 6, 2012, NHL Commissioner Gary Bettman, right, and deputy commissioner Bill Daly speak to reporters in New York.

Associated Press

celing games through Dec. 30 in addition to the New Year's Day Winter Classic and the All-Star Game, which were already wiped out.

The latest cancellations generally were regarded as both bad news and good news.

While losing another two weeks hurts the league and the players, the fact that

the NHL did not take more games off the schedule sparked speculation owners are holding out hope of making a deal that could start the season in early January.

Bettman has said the league would not want to play anything less than a 48-game season, which is what it had after 1994-95 lockout ended. □

Patriots rout Texans 42-14 in key matchup

BARRY WILNER

AP Pro Football Writer

FOXBOROUGH, Massachusetts (AP) — The New England Patriots downed Houston 42-14 on Monday, stamping themselves once again as the team to fear in the American Football Conference — and making the Texans look like pretenders.

Tom Brady threw for four touchdowns and 296 yards as New England manhandled the team with the league's best record. The Patriots (10-3), who already own the AFC East title, won their seventh straight and moved one game behind the Texans (11-2) for the conference's top seed.

A matchup of the top two scoring teams in the league was a mismatch from the outset. It took take



New England only one possession to start its scoring barrage as the Patriots

surpassed their average of 35.8 points per game. Wes Welker's 31-yard punt

return and 25-yard reception — the 107th straight game he's had a catch — led to Aaron Hernandez's 7-yard score. That gave Brady 45 consecutive

New England Patriots strong safety Steve Gregory (28) breaks up a pass intended for Houston Texans wide receiver Lestar Jean, top, during the second quarter of an NFL football game in Foxborough, Mass., Monday, Dec. 10, 2012. Associated Press

games with a TD pass, third longest in NFL history. Houston, which had won six straight games, threatened on its next series, only to have Matt Schaub force a ball into double coverage in the Patriots' end zone. Devin McCourty picked it off and returned it 19 yards, setting up more pinpoint throws by Brady, who fin-

ished 21 of 35.

His receivers were so uncovered: Brandon Lloyd for 14 yards, Danny Woodhead for 18, Hernandez for 13, then Lloyd for the 37-yard TD to make it 14-0. Texans defensive coordinator Wade Phillips could only shake his head in disgust at his players' inability to challenge the Patriots.

At the end of a 70-yard drive helped by a 26-yard interference call on Danieal Manning, no Texans were lined up to Brady's left in front of Hernandez. A quick snap, a quicker pass and the tight end waltzed into the end zone.

New England was headed for its 20th successive home win in December, and its 21st straight victory in the second half of the schedule. □

Saints player suspensions lifted in bounties case



In this Nov. 30, 2012, file photo, New Orleans Saints football defensive end Will Smith, left, and linebacker Jonathan Vilma arrive at an attorney's office in Washington, for a hearing on their appeals of bounties suspensions.

Associated Press



In this Nov. 30, 2012, file photo, former NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue arrives at an attorney's office in Washington for a hearing on the bounty system of the New Orleans Saints NFL football team.

Associated Press

league's bounty investigation of the club.

Tagliabue, however, found that three of the players engaged in conduct detrimental to the league. He said they participated in a performance pool that rewarded key plays — including hard tackles — that could merit fines. But he stressed that the team's

coaches were very much involved. "Unlike Saints' broad organizational misconduct, player appeals involve sharply focused issues of alleged individual player misconduct in several different aspects," said a portion of the ruling released by the NFL. "My affirmation of Commissioner Goodell's findings could

certainly justify the issuance of fines. However, this entire case has been contaminated by the coaches and others in the Saints' organization." Tagliabue was appointed by his successor, Commissioner Roger Goodell, to handle a second round of player appeals to the league in connection with the Saints' cash-for-hits program run by former defensive coordinator Gregg Williams from 2009-2011. The players initially opposed his appointment. Saints linebacker Jonathan Vilma had been given a full-season suspension, while defensive end Will Smith, Cleveland linebacker Scott Fujita and free agent defensive line-

man Anthony Hargrove each received shorter suspensions. Fujita was the only player cleared of conduct detrimental to the league by Tagliabue.

None of the players sat out any games because of suspensions. They have been

allowed to play while appeals are pending, though Fujita is on injured reserve and Hargrove is not with a team. Shortly before the regular season, the initial suspensions were thrown out by an appeals panel created by the league's collective bargaining agreement. Goodell then reissued them, with some changes, and now those have been dismissed.

Meanwhile, the players have challenged the NFL's handling of the entire process in federal court, but U.S. District Judge Ginger Berrigan had been waiting to see how the latest round of appeals played out before deciding whether to get involved.

With the player suspensions overturned, the end of a nearly 10-month dispute over how the NFL handled an investigation that covered three seasons and gathered about 50,000 pages of documents could be near. □

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With big night from James, Heat top Hawks, 101-92

MIAMI (AP) — LeBron James scored 27 points, Dwyane Wade had 26 and the Miami Heat pulled away in the second half to beat the Atlanta Hawks 101-92 on Monday night.

James (10-16) and Wade (11-13) made 21 of 29 shots for Miami, which shot 58 percent overall to improve to 10-1 at home this season. Chris Bosh had 14 points and 10 rebounds, and Norris Cole scored 10 for the Heat, who handed the Hawks only their second loss in 11 games.

Josh Smith scored 22 points and Al Horford finished with 20 points and 11 rebounds for Atlanta, which briefly held the lead midway through the third quarter before the Heat got rolling and moved 1½ games ahead of the Hawks in the Southeast Division.

Atlanta is 0-2 against Miami this season and 1-7 since March 2011.

A 17-4 run was the difference maker, turning a two-point deficit into an 11-point lead with 1:24 remaining in the third. Wade got it started with a jumper, and he wound up with eight points during the burst, including a layup off a perfect pass by James from the right side of the lane.

SPURS 134, ROCKETS 126, OT
HOUSTON (AP) — Gary Neal hit seven 3-pointers and scored 29 points, and Tony Parker had a triple-double with 27 points, 12 rebounds and 12 assists to lead San Antonio over Houston.

Jeremy Lin had his best game since joining the Rockets, scoring a career high-tying 38 points with leading scorer James Hard-

en sidelined by a sprained right ankle.

Neal's last 3-pointer followed by a three-point play by Manu Ginobili put the Spurs ahead 130-122 with two minutes left in overtime, and they held on for the win. It was San Antonio's fifth straight win overall and second over Houston in three days after a 114-92 victory Friday.

Houston is 0-2 since coach Kevin McHale returned to the bench following the death of his daughter.

WARRIORS 104, BOBCATS 96
CHARLOTTE, North Carolina (AP) — Stephen Curry put on a show for his hometown fans, finishing with 27 points, seven assists and seven rebounds to lead Golden State over Charlotte.

Curry, who grew up in Charlotte and made a name for himself leading nearby Davidson College to the brink of the Final Four in 2008, shot 10 of 22 from the field and hit four 3-pointers. It was his eighth straight 20-point game, a career best.

David Lee had 25 points and 11 rebounds for the Warriors (14-7), who have won seven of their past eight games and improved to 4-0 on their current seven-game Eastern trip.

Kemba Walker scored 24 points to lead the Bobcats, who have lost eight straight.

MAVERICKS 119, KINGS 96
DALLAS (AP) — O.J. Mayo scored 19 points and Dallas took control with a 31-3 run in the first half to beat Sacramento for the 17th straight time at home during the regular season.

Chris Kaman, playing on a sprained left ankle he suffered last week, scored 16

of his 18 points in the first half for Dallas.

Francisco Garcia, who was 7 of 12 from 3-point range, and DeMarcus Cousins scored 25 points apiece for the Kings, who haven't won in Dallas during the regular season since Feb. 27, 2003. Mayo hit a jumper late in the first quarter to kick off the game-turning run for the Mavs, who led by as many as 28 in the first half and were up 65-43 at half-time.

TRAIL BLAZERS 92, RAPTORS 74

PORTLAND, Oregon (AP) — LaMarcus Aldridge had 30 points and 12 rebounds to lead Portland to a win over Toronto in a game that was overshadowed by injuries for both sides.

J.J. Hickson added 16 points and 11 rebounds for the Trail Blazers, who were without injured starters Nicolas Batum and Wesley Matthews.

DeMar DeRozan scored 20 points for the Raptors, who lost forward Andrea Bargnani to a right elbow injury and guard Kyle Lowry to a right shoulder problem during the game.

Toronto also lost reserve Amir Johnson in the second half after he was ejected for arguing with an official. Johnson threw his mouthpiece and had to be restrained by teammates before exiting.

76ERS 104, PISTONS 97

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Evan Turner had 18 points and 11 rebounds, and Jrue Holiday scored 25 points to lead Philadelphia past Detroit. Thaddeus Young added 20 points and Spencer Hawes had 15 for the Sixers. □



Atlanta Hawks' Devin Harris (34) goes to the basket between Miami Heat's Mario Chalmers (15) and LeBron James, background, during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, Dec. 10, 2012, in Miami.

Associated Press



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Winter Solstice 2012



By: Dr Carlos Viana

This year's shortest day on 21 December is a special Winter Solstice. The word 'solstice' in Latin means "the sun standing still". Without getting too technical, the Sun stands still in tilt relative to our sun; that is, the seasonal movement of the Sun's path (as seen from Earth) comes to a stop before reversing direction. Many cultures celebrate various combinations of the winter and summer solstices leading to holidays around these events. This year's Solstice is special because books and movies have been marketing fears about 2012 End of Times. We saw a \$200-million disaster movie with cracking continents, plunging asteroids, burning cities, and a tsunami throwing an aircraft carrier through the White House. The movie's ominous slogan: "Find out the truth." With changing weather and real natural and unnatural disasters rising, it's easy to get caught up in the frenzy. But, we've had many Hollywood disaster movies, this time the reason why supposedly the end of the world is coming is the

ancient Maya of Mexico and Guatemala kept a calendar that is about to roll up the red carpet of time, swing the solar system into transcendental alignment with the heart of the Milky Way, and turn Earth into a bowling pin for a rogue planet heading down our alley for a strike. Remember the last doomsday scare when the world got all worked up over the mystical turning of a calendar was the false Millennium of Jan. 1, 2000. Never mind the actual Y2K computer-date bug. I read that many companies paid millions to have their computers "protected". As a medical anthropologist, understanding the circular concept of time held by the indigenous people all over the world, I know the Mayan calendar is the end of one cycle and the beginning of another. Among their other accomplishments, the ancient Mayas invented a calendar of remarkable accuracy and complexity more than six thousand years ago. Imagine, five thousand years ago people in Central America developed a celestial calendar that indicates the Earth passes through a "Galactic Wave" every 5,225 years. In Western cultures there are twelve astrological ages corresponding to the twelve zodiacal signs in western astrology. At the completion of one cycle of twelve astrological ages, the cycle repeats itself. We have been in the Age of Pisces, which was a time of traditional values and

structures. One complete period of this astrological precession is called a Great Year or Platonic Year. Pretty close to the Mayan concept. In the Western view this new period is called the Age of Aquarius where what evolves is that we will be turning away from current ways of thinking. There is an expectation that the Aquarian age will usher in a period of group consciousness. As an Oriental Medical Doctor, I see similarities between the Mayan calendar and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). Both are more than five thousand years old and both provide information and concepts that are very advanced even in today's knowledge. The Mayan calendar precisely predicts the movements of the planets in the universe in 5,225 year cycles. An important philosophical concept of Traditional Chinese Medicine is that the human body is a miniature universe, complete with a set of sophisticated interconnected systems called meridians which, in a healthy human body, work in harmony to maintain healthy function and balance. The Mayan calendar and the information it presents is not relevant for everyone in contemporary culture. Some people will hear of it and think, "Oh, that's a nice story" and move on. Others may hear some truth in it and have a deeper understanding. Some of us realize that as we move from the Piscean age into Aquarius, we are being shown that the "Emperor has no clothes." Our

current belief systems upon which we have based our religious, medical foundations and way of life will be shattered in the upcoming years. In the same way even Traditional Chinese Medicine is not for everyone. First, you must feel its truth. Some people placing all their faith that regular medicine will save them, are not yet ready to "see" that pharmaceutical drugs may not be the "magic" we are told to believe they are... "this Emperor has no clothes" that represents true healing. People tell me they are interested in an effective, natural, holistic form of medicine but their fear of needles is holding them back from trying acupuncture. Let me calm your fears by sharing what many patients have been surprised to find out—acupuncture is quite painless and calming! Acupuncture is understood by the World Health Organization to help with pain and many health problems. If you're really ready to change old beliefs that no longer serve you and need support, we offer CHAKRA BALANCING, a therapy using the acupuncture of the highest energy points, with guided meditation. Get The Point! The world is not going to end Dec 21, 2012, in apocalypse. But according to Mayans and many scientists, it is the end of one cycle of time and the beginning of another. Many traditions have predicted the same thing and if you're familiar with common astrology, it is referred to as the "dawning of the age of Aquarius." There is an old Chinese

saying: "tian-renheyi". Its basic meaning is that man should be in balance with the universe or that man is like a bridge between heaven and earth. As you open your energy meridians you can feel your connection with the universe inside of you. Let us help you find balance and peace in this joyous time. Join us to raise your consciousness to the new age of humanity.

CARLOS VIANA, Ph. D. is an Oriental Medical Doctor (O.M.D.) having studied in Shanghai, China; a Board Cert. Clinical Nutritionist (C.C.N.), a fellow member of the Board Certified Association of Addiction Professionals (C.Ad.), the Chairperson of the Latin American Committee of the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology (IAOMT), a Rejuvenating Cell Therapist and specializes in Anti-Aging Medicine, has a weekly radio program, writes and lectures extensively. For information: VIANA NATURAL HEALING CENTER NV, Kibaima 7, Aruba, TEL: 585-1270 FAX: 585-4789, Web Sight: www.vianaheal.com GIVE THE GIFT OF HEALTH THIS HOLIDAY SEASON! *Gift Certificates & Health Products Available * Dr. Viana's BOOK: Prescriptions from Paradise, Introduction to Biocompatible Medicine – Available at local Bookstores, Hotel Gift shops and Boticas. Signed copies at Viana Healing Center, E-book Holiday Special at www.amazon.com, check for Events at: facebook.com/vianahealingcenter

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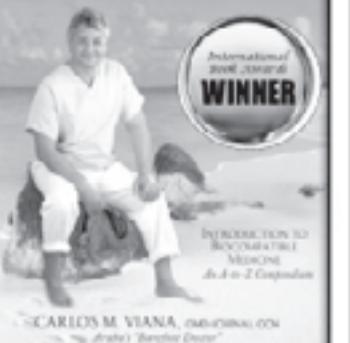
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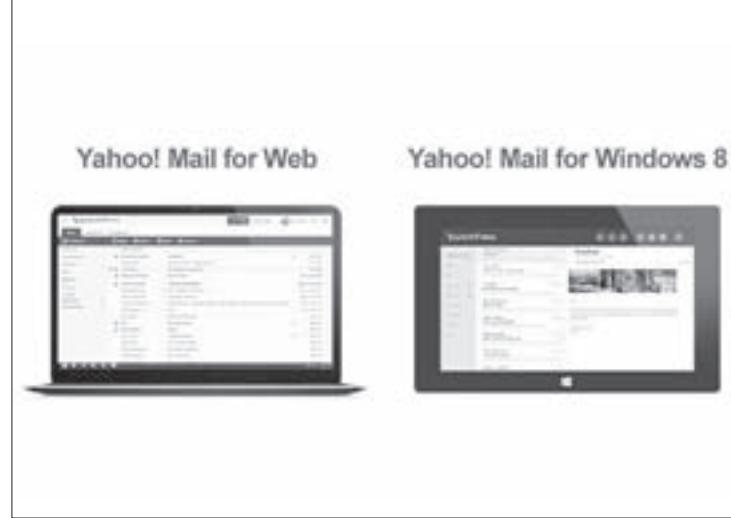
A great time for the whole family

Yahoo revamps email in bid to catch up with Gmail

MICHAEL LIEDTKE
AP Technology Writer
SAN FRANCISCO (AP)

Yahoo is spiffing up and expanding its email service in an attempt to regain some of the ground lost to a Google alternative that lured away millions of users.

The changes unveiled Tuesday are meant to make Yahoo's email faster and easier to use on the Web. To cater to the growing audience checking their email on smartphones and tablet computers, Yahoo also introduced mobile apps for the iPhone, iPad and devices powered by Microsoft Corp.'s recently released Windows 8 system. The company, which is based in Sunnyvale, California, also updated its email app designed for Google Inc.'s Android operating system. The email overhaul is part of Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer's crusade to give people more reasons to visit the company's online services and stick around longer. In doing so, Mayer hopes to sell more advertising and accelerate Yahoo's revenue growth after years of financial malaise. The stagnation has kept the company's stock price below \$20 for more than four years. Yahoo shares were hovering near \$30 before the company squandered an opportunity to sell itself to Microsoft for \$33 per share in May 2008. Yahoo's stock rose 9 cents to close at \$19.52 on Tuesday. The stock has surged 25 percent since Yahoo hired Mayer from Google nearly five months ago. During her 13 years as a top Google executive,



In this undated image made available by Yahoo the company's recently retooled free email service is shown on a web device and tablet. Aside from the new look aimed at regaining some of the ground Yahoo lost to Google's popular alternative, Yahoo introduced Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2012, email apps for the iPhone, iPad and mobile devices running on the new Windows 8 operating system.

Copyright 2012 The Associated Press.

Mayer played a key role in building the company's Gmail. The service was a novelty when it began in 2004 and with Mayer's help it transformed into a trend-setting service that surpassed the early leads of rival offerings from Yahoo and Microsoft. Through October, Gmail had more than 295 million active users to eclipse Microsoft's Hotmail at nearly 284 million users and Yahoo email at 282 million, according to the most recent data from the research firm comScore. At the same time last year, Hotmail led the pack with 335 million users, followed by Yahoo at 303 million and Gmail at more than 245 million. With more people gravitating to Gmail, Microsoft also recently redesigned Hotmail and rebranded the service as Outlook.com — a reference to the communications channel built into the software maker's widely used Office suite of programs. In a sign Google isn't taking

its lead for granted, the company is the in process of phasing in changes to Gmail that will give it a slightly different look and add more features.

All the retooling underscores the ongoing importance of traditional email, even as people increasingly rely on text messages sent on phones and thoughts shared on Facebook and Twitter. Despite its shrinking market share, Yahoo says it still processes about 30 billion emails each day and estimates its users collectively check their inboxes about 190 million times per day.

Although none of the major email providers charge to set up an account on the Web, the services are valuable because they encourage repeat visits and require people to log in. Internet companies covet activities occurring under a logged-in identity because they can more easily track people's preferences and tailor ads more likely to appeal to users' tastes. □


Yahoo! Mail for iPhone

Yahoo! Mail for Android

In this undated image made available by Yahoo the company's recently retooled free email service is shown on mobile devices. Aside from the new look aimed at regaining some of the ground Yahoo lost to Google's popular alternative, Yahoo introduced Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2012, email apps for the iPhone, iPad and mobile devices running on the new Windows 8 operating system.



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Stocks gain on Fed stimulus, 'cliff' optimism

STEVE ROTHWELL

AP Business Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The stock market showed signs of life Tuesday following hopeful signs of progress in budget talks being held in Washington. The Standard & Poor's 500 had its biggest gain this month.

The Dow gained 78.56 points, or 0.6 percent, to 13,248.44, after climbing as much as 137 points earlier. The Standard & Poor's 500 index finished up 9.29 points at 1,427.84. Both the Dow and the S&P have risen for five straight days. The Nasdaq composite ended up 35.34 points at 3,022.30.

Delta Air Lines rose 52 cents, or 5.1 percent, to \$10.66 after the company said it will buy almost half of Richard Branson's Virgin Atlantic for \$360 million as it seeks a bigger share of the lucrative New York-to-London travel market.

AIG gained \$1.90 to \$35.26

after the U.S. Treasury Department said it has sold the rest of its stake in the insurer. AIG was bailed out by the government after nearly collapsing during the 2008 financial crisis.

Stocks have edged up since the start of the month as in-

vestors watch for developments in the budget talks. Tax increases and federal spending cuts are scheduled to start Jan. 1 unless a deal is reached to reduce the U.S. budget deficit. Economists say the measures, if implemented, could

eventually push the economy back into recession. The S&P 500 fell as much as 5 percent after the U.S. presidential election Nov. 6 as investors worried that gridlock in Washington would prevent a budget deal. With Tuesday's advance, the S&P 500 has recouped almost all of the ground it lost since the election when it closed at 1,428.39. The Wall Street Journal reported that budget negotiations between the White House and Republican House Speaker John Boehner had "progressed steadily" in recent days. That reinvigorated talks that appeared to have stalled, the paper reported, citing people close to the process.

Stock markets stayed higher even after Boehner said midday Tuesday that President Barack Obama is slow-walking talks to avoid the fiscal cliff, and hasn't outlined spending cuts he's

willing to support as part of a compromise. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid said Tuesday afternoon that it would be "extremely difficult" to pass legislation to address the so-called fiscal cliff before Christmas, but added there's still a chance it can be done.

"The market has been very susceptible to 'fiscal cliff' headlines," said Todd Salamone, a senior vice president at Schaeffers Investment Research, adding that stocks have rallied more on good news than they have fallen on indications that talks were stalling. "It seems the expectation is that something will get done, but it's a very cautious expectation. There's a lot of money on the sidelines."

Stocks are holding on to their gains for the year. The Dow Jones is up 8.4 percent since the start of the year, while the S&P 500 has gained 13.5 percent. □



Specialist Christian Sanfilippo works on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2012. The stock market showed signs of life Tuesday following hopeful signs of progress in budget talks being held in Washington.

(AP Photo/Richard Drew)

UK regulator steps up compliance rules for HSBC

LONDON (AP) — Britain's financial regulator says it is taking steps to force HSBC to improve its legal compliance after the bank agreed to pay \$1.9 billion to settle a U.S. money laundering probe.

The Financial Services Authority said Tuesday that HSBC must establish a

board committee with a mandate to oversee matters relating to anti-money laundering and terrorist financing. It also said it has required HSBC to appoint a group money laundering officer approved by the regulator to ensure that the company complies with all anti-money laundering requirements.

HSBC agreed to a record settlement with U.S. authorities on Tuesday over a probe in connection with the laundering of money from drug traffickers in Mexico.

The U.S. government also alleges that HSBC intentionally allowed prohibited transactions with Iran, Libya, Sudan and Burma. □



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Exxon: US energy revival has staying power

JONATHAN FAHEY

AP Energy Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — Exxon says the energy renaissance in the U.S. will continue and predicts that North America will become a net exporter of oil and natural gas by the middle of the next decade.

The company's annual long-term energy outlook, released Tuesday, says the rapid growth of production in the U.S. and Canada, along with improved energy efficiency, will lead to more oil and natural gas being sent overseas.

Exxon Mobil Corp.'s annual outlook is noted by investors and policymakers, and the company says its conclusions shape its decisions about where to invest. The main conclusions dovetail with recent forecasts from the U.S. government and others.

Among the main themes from Exxon's report:

— Demand for energy will grow worldwide, but slower

than the overall economy because of efficiency gains.

— Energy demand will remain flat in the devel-

— The biggest shift will be growth in the use of natural gas and a decline in the use of coal. By 2025, natural gas is expected to over-



Steam rises at an Exxon Mobil refinery in Baytown, Texas. Exxon says the energy renaissance in the U.S. will continue and predicts that North America will become a net exporter of oil and gas by the middle of the next decade. The oil and gas giant's latest long-term energy outlook, released Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2012, says the rapid growth of production in the U.S. and Canada, along with improved energy efficiency, will lead to more oil and gas being sent overseas.

(AP Photo/Pat Sullivan)

oped world; nearly all of the growth in demand will occur in developing countries.

take coal as the second most used fuel, after oil.

— By 2025, the U.S. will likely be exporting natural gas in

large volumes and producing more oil while consuming less. Canada will continue to be a major crude exporter.

While Exxon does make assumptions about energy prices to make its predictions, it does not disclose what those price assumptions are.

Oil and natural gas production in the U.S. has surged thanks to the combination of hydraulic fracturing, or fracking, and horizontal drilling that allows companies to tap hydrocarbons trapped in shale and other tight rock formations. As a result, natural gas prices have plummeted and the

nation's dependence on oil imports has been dramatically reduced.

The International Energy Agency and the U.S. Energy Department's Energy Information Administration have also highlighted the North American oil and gas boom in recent reports. The IEA said last month that the U.S. could overtake Saudi Arabia as the world's top crude producer by 2020.

But fracking has raised environmental concerns. Opponents say drilling fluid or wastewater can seep into water supplies if wells are not constructed properly or if wastewater is not disposed of properly. □

US employers advertise more jobs in October; up by 128,000

C. S. RUGABER

AP Economics Writer

WASHINGTON (AP) — U.S. employers advertised more jobs in October than September, a hopeful sign that hiring could pick up in the coming months.

The Labor Department said Tuesday that job openings rose by 128,000 to 3.68 million. That's the most since June.

The number of available jobs is slowly climbing back to the roughly 4 million that were advertised each month before the recession

began in December 2007. With nearly 12.3 million people unemployed in October, there were 3.3 unemployed people, on average, competing for each open job. That's the lowest ratio since November 2008. Still, in a healthy economy, the ratio is roughly 2 to 1. In one positive sign, the number of available construction jobs jumped to 130,000, from 82,000 in September. That's the most in more than four years. The housing market is slowly recovering and builders are

breaking ground on more single-family homes.

Job openings also rose in manufacturing, retail, and hotels and restaurants. Professional and business services, a category that includes engineers and accountants as well as temporary jobs, also posted more openings.

Companies kept creating jobs in November at a modest pace. Employers added 146,000 net jobs last month, the government said Friday in a separate report. □



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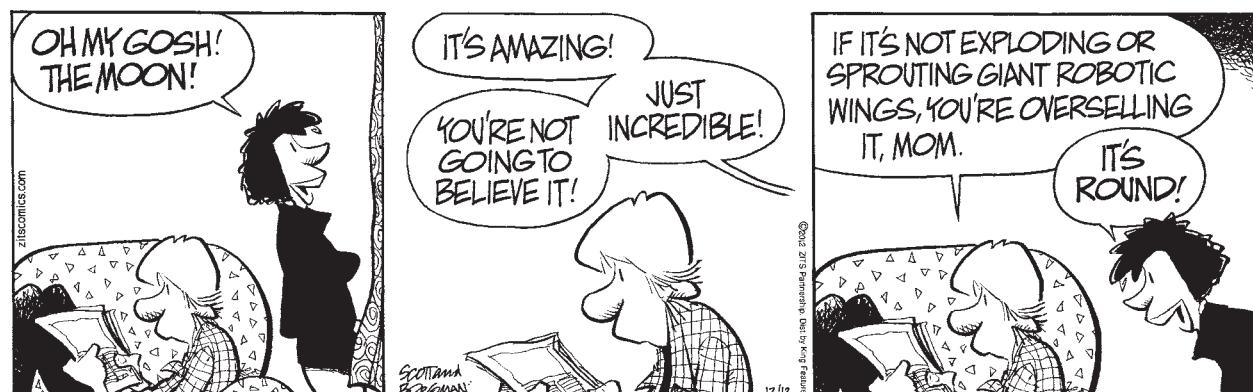
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Baby Blues



Zits



Conceptis Sudoku

			2	9								
		1			2							
	3		8	5								
4	3		8	7								
8		7	6	9		4						
5					6							
8						7						
	1	6	5	3	2							
	2	7										
12/12												

Difficulty Level ★★★

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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

9	7	3	5	1	8	6	2	4				
8	4	2	9	3	6	5	7	1				
5	6	1	4	7	2	9	8	3				
3	9	4	8	5	7	2	1	6				
1	2	7	6	4	3	8	5	9				
6	5	8	1	2	9	4	3	7				
4	8	5	7	9	1	3	6	2				
7	3	6	2	8	4	1	9	5				
2	1	9	3	6	5	7	4	8				
12/12												

Yesterday's puzzle answer

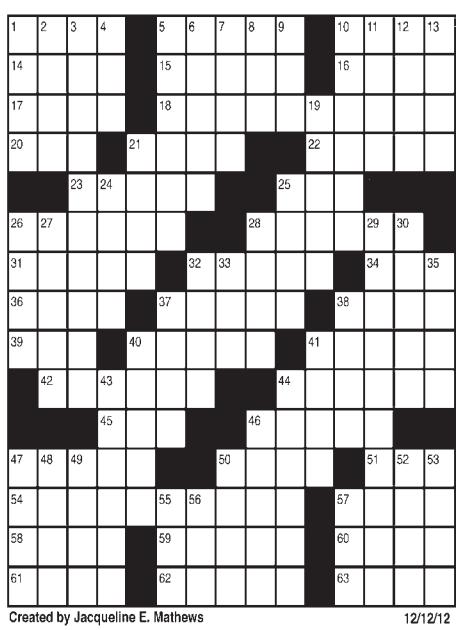
9	7	3	5	1	8	6	2	4				
8	4	2	9	3	6	5	7	1				
5	6	1	4	7	2	9	8	3				
3	9	4	8	5	7	2	1	6				
1	2	7	6	4	3	8	5	9				
6	5	8	1	2	9	4	3	7				
4	8	5	7	9	1	3	6	2				
7	3	6	2	8	4	1	9	5				
2	1	9	3	6	5	7	4	8				
12/12												

ACROSS

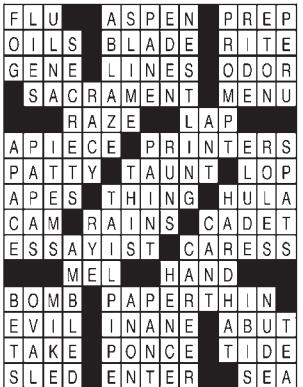
1 Deuce or joker
5 Piece of china
10 Nap
14 Eggs ___ easy; cafe order
15 Opponent
16 Fighting force
17 Prying
18 Ceremony for a new member
20 Female sheep
21 Frosted
22 Slight coloring
23 High points
25 TV's Rickles
26 Leftover bits
28 Alps & Andes
31 Coughs harshly
32 Flatware piece
34 Taxi
36 Prolonged pain
37 Enormous
38 Opening; gap
39 Actress West
40 Asked, as a question
41 More rational
42 Hateful
44 Approximately
45 Encountered
46 Chandelier pendant, e.g.
47 Cairo's nation
50 ___-back; relaxed
51 Wedding words
54 Disloyal to one's nation
57 Read quickly
58 Holler quickly
59 Group formed to help a sheriff
60 Breathe heavily
61 Excessive publicity
62 Cedars & oaks
63 Additionally

Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

12/12/12



Tuesday's Puzzle Solved

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6 ___ up; forms a row
7 Passionate
8 Tit for ___
9 Samuel's mentor
10 PG-13 or R, for example
11 Moran or Gray
12 Air pollution
13 Actress Daly
14 Opening; gap
15 Asked, as a question
16 Fighting force
17 Prying
18 Ceremony for a new member
19 Group formed to help a sheriff
20 Female sheep
21 Cedars & oaks
22 Slight coloring
23 High points
24 Birthday party dessert
25 Holler quickly
26 Loony
27 Read quickly
28 Orange peel
29 Cost-effective
30 Business transactions
31 Cairo's nation
32 Smooch
33 Scot's "no"
34 Enormous
35 Lahr or Parks
36 Leftover bits
37 Painful joint affliction
38 Pork products
39 Keats & Yeats
40 Glided smoothly
41 Quayle and Rather
42 Encountered
43 Pierce with a stake
44 Ascends
45 Parched
46 Stop briefly
47 Carve in glass
48 Hair color

12/12/12

U.S. students far from first in math, science

JOSH LEDERMAN

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) —

American fourth-graders are performing better than they were four years ago in math and reading, but students four years older show no such progress, a global study released Tuesday revealed.

Although the U.S. remains in the top dozen or so countries in all subjects tested, the gap between the U.S. and the top-performing nations is much wider at the eighth-grade level, especially in math.

"When you start looking at our older students, we see less improvement over time," said Jack Buckley, commissioner of the National Center for Education Statistics, which coordinated the U.S. portion of the international exam.

Even where U.S. student scores have improved, many other nations have improved much faster, leaving American students far behind many of their peers — especially in Asia and Europe.

With an eye toward global competitiveness, U.S. education officials are sounding the alarm over what they describe as a recurring theme when American students are put to the test. Lamenting what he described as "sober cautionary notes," Education Secretary Arne Duncan said it was unacceptable that eighth-grade achievement in math and science are stagnant, with U.S. students far less likely than many Asian counterparts to reach advanced levels in science. □

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Air Force sends mystery mini-shuttle back to space

MARCI DUNN

AP Aerospace Writer

CAPE CANAVERAL, Florida

(AP) — The military's small, top-secret version of the space shuttle rocketed into orbit Tuesday for a repeat mystery mission, two years after making the first flight of its kind.

The Air Force launched the unmanned spacecraft Tuesday hidden on top of an Atlas V rocket.

As if on cue, clouds quickly swallowed up the rocket as it disappeared out over the ocean.

It is the second flight for this original X-37B spaceplane. The craft circled the planet for seven months in 2010.

A second X-37B spacecraft spent more than a year in orbit.

These high-tech mystery machines — 29 feet long (eight meters) — are about one-quarter the size of NASA's old space shuttles and can land automatically on a runway.

The two previous touchdowns occurred in Southern California; this one might end on NASA's three-mile (five kilometer)-long runway once reserved for the space agency's shuttles.

The military isn't saying much if anything about this new secret mission



This April 5, 2010 photo made available by the U.S. Air Force via NASA shows the X-37B Orbital Test Vehicle at the Astrotech facility in Titusville, Fla. Associated Press

known as OTV-3, or Orbital Test Vehicle, flight No. 3. In fact, launch commentary ended 17 minutes into the flight and a news blackout

followed.

But one scientific observer, Jonathan McDowell of the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics, speculates the spaceplane is carrying sensors designed

for spying and likely is serving as a testbed for future satellites.

He dismisses rumors of "exotic ideas" for the X-37B as weaponry or shadowing a Chinese satellite.

While acknowledging he does not know what the spaceplane is carrying, McDowell said on-board sensors could be capable of imaging or intercepting transmissions of electronic emissions from terrorist training sites in Afghanistan or other hot spots.

"All the sorts of things that spy satellites generally do," he said.

The beauty of a reusable spaceplane is that it can be launched on short notice based on need, McDowell said.

What's important about this flight is that it is the first reflight.

"That is pretty cool," McDowell said, "reusing your spacecraft after a runway landing.

That's something that has only really been done with the shuttle."

Now retired museum pieces, NASA's space shuttles stretch 122 feet (37 meters) long, and have 78-foot (24-meter) wingspans and weights of more than 170,000 pounds (77,111 kilograms).

They were launched, from 1981 to 2011, with two strap-

on booster rockets and an external fuel tank feeding three main engines.

The X-37B wingspan is 15 feet (4.6 meters), and the 11,000-pound (5,000-kilogram), Boeing-built vessel requires the United Launch Alliance's hefty Atlas V for hoisting. It is solar powered. The two previous secret X-37B flights were in 200-plus-(300-plus)-mile-high orbits, circling at roughly 40-degree angles to the equator, as calculated by amateur satellite trackers.

That means the craft flew over the swatch between 40 degrees or so north latitude and 40 degrees or so south latitude.

That puts Russia's far north out of the spaceplane's observing realm, McDowell noted.

"It might be studying Middle Eastern latitudes or it might just be being used for sensor tests over the United States," he said.

McDowell speculates that this newest flight will follow suit.

The International Space Station, by comparison, orbits about 250 miles (400 kilometers) high but at a much steeper 51.6-degree inclination, or angle to the equator, that covers more territory.

The X-37B program, which dates back to 1999, is operated by the Air Force Rapid Capabilities Office and geared toward space experimentation.

Some scientists — like Laura Grego of the Union of Concerned Scientists — argue the Air Force could accomplish the same objectives by using cheaper, more efficient spacecraft that either burn up on entry or parachute down.

"The ability to return to Earth carries a high price," Grego said in a statement. □

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Ricky Martin wishes he could come out again

EDITH M. LEDERER

Associated Press

UNITED NATIONS (AP) —

Latin superstar Ricky Martin is telling a U.N. conference on homophobia that he wishes he could come out again so he could tell people struggling with their identities that "it's just beautiful — you find love." Martin said Tuesday that "for many years, I lived in fear ... because I was hating myself because I grew up listening to a very crooked concept: 'You're gay. You belong in hell.'"

Martin, who is currently starring on Broadway in "Evita," said it was amazing to be at the United Nations surrounded by people "fighting for one cause — equality and love and social justice." He praised U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon who got a standing ovation after telling the conference that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people — the LGBTs — "are entitled to the same rights as everyone else." "They, too, are born free and equal," Ban said. "I stand shoulder-to-shoulder with them in their struggle for human rights."

The secretary-general said he is "pained" that more than 76 countries still criminalize homosexuality. "I am here to again denounce violence and demand action for true equality," he said. While the past decade has seen far-reaching reforms in Europe, the Americas and a number



In this Nov. 5, 2012 file photo, entertainer Ricky Martin walks onstage to speak during a campaign stop for President Barack Obama in Orlando, Fla. Associated Press

of African and Asian countries, Ban said, in a number of countries — including Ukraine — draft laws have been proposed that would criminalize public discussion of homosexuality. South African singing star Yvonne Chaka Chaka, a human rights activist and goodwill ambassador for the U.N. children's fund who is married and has four children, said "I think straight people should respect other people because, for me, I don't think there's anything crooked about LGBT." Their only "crime," she said, "is because they love the same gender." Chaka said her husband is a prince who is allowed to have three or four wives "but I would not let him." I will never allow him to have a second wife, and he knows that. That is why he chose me," she said. "If he wants to, goodbye." □

'Lincoln' leads Critics' Choice Awards nominees

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Film

critics love "Lincoln." The historical drama earned a record-breaking 13 nominations for the Critics' Choice Movie Awards. The Broadcast Film Critics Association announced the nominees for its 18th annual awards ceremony Tuesday in Los Angeles.

"Lincoln" beat the 12 nods earned by 2010's "Black Swan" with bids for director Steven Spielberg,

star Daniel Day-Lewis and supporting actors Sally Field and Tommy Lee Jones, as well as cinematography, adapted screenplay, costume design, makeup, editing, art direction, score and acting ensemble.

"Les Misérables" follows with 11 nominations and "Silver Linings Playbook" has 10. "Life of Pi" earned nine nods. "Argo," "Skyfall" and "The Master" each have seven. □



2013 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame inductee Quincy Jones, left, mingles with fellow inductees Nancy Wilson, center, and her sister Ann of the band Heart following a news conference to announce the 2013 inductees, Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2012, in Los Angeles. Associated Press

Vindication for 2013 Rock Hall of Fame inductees

CHRIS TALBOTT

AP Music Writer

Randy Newman's glad he didn't have to do anything drastic to get into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. The members of Rush are choosing to let bygones be bygones. And Quincy Jones, well, he's still mad. All were among inductees announced Tuesday by Flea of The Red Hot Chili Peppers at a news conference in Los Angeles. For most of this year's inductees, inclusion was a long time coming.

"I'm very happy," the 69-year-old Newman said Monday from his home in Los Angeles. "I thought I'd have to die first, but I'm glad I'm around to see it." Newman is joined in the 2013 class by the eclectic group of rockers Rush and Heart, rap group Public Enemy, "Queen of Disco" Donna Summer and bluesman Albert King. Jones and his friend Lou Adler will enter the hall as Ahmet Ertegun Award winners for their contributions to rock beyond performance.

They will be inducted into the hall of fame April 18 in Los Angeles. The ceremony will mark the end of a long wait for fans of five of those six acts, who've been eligible for entry for some time. Public Enemy was induct-

ed on its first ballot appearance, swelling the ranks of hip-hop entries.

In many ways, the 2013 class balances the scales, though not nearly soon enough for some new members.

"Well, it's about time, man," Jones said late Monday night in an interview from his home in Los Angeles. "But I promise you I'm not sitting around worrying about it."

Summer, who passed away at age 63 in May, gains entry after six years as a nominee. King, a deep influence on Jimi Hendrix and Stevie Ray Vaughn who died in 1992, now takes his place alongside all the other legendary blues guitarists in the hall. Rush, one of the most-played staples of classic rock radio, gained entry following its first appearance on the ballot.

But the Canadian trio became eligible in 1998 and was repeatedly left off the list, to the great consternation of its legion of fans who cried bias against prog rock. Heart also waited a decade to make it on the ballot, gaining entry during its second appearance.

After years of disappointment, then disinterest, Rush's Alex Lifeson said the band now feels "wonderful" about its entry into the

hall and is especially happy for its followers.

"First of all it's all water under the bridge and it was a very tiny bridge," the 59-year-old guitarist said in a phone interview from his home in Toronto. "I think our fans are more upset than we were because they feel a real bond to this band and it's been an important part of their lives in some form, and to be snubbed was snubbing them at the same time. ... Perhaps there were times when I thought if this ever happens I'm not going to bother going, or who cares or whatever, but at the end of the day positive karma is an important thing and this is an important thing to a lot of our fans and people we know." Jones was less forgiving of the long wait he had. The 79-year-old entertainment icon's fingerprints are all over the hall of fame. He pops up often at key moments in rock 'n' roll history and was even Ray Charles' presenter during the soul singer's induction at the inaugural 1986 ceremony. He never expected to wait so long for his own entry. "I was pissed off about it at first because I saw how it was going down and who was going in and who wasn't," Jones said with a deep laugh. □

Lawsuit claims TV's 'Storage Wars' show is rigged

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Some of the valuables found hidden in abandoned lockers on A&E's "Storage Wars" have been added by producers to deceive viewers, a former cast member of the show claims in a lawsuit filed Tuesday.

David Hester's suit claims producers have added a BMW Mini and newspapers chronicling Elvis Presley's death to lockers in order to build drama for the show and that his complaints about the practices led to his firing.

Hester is seeking more than \$750,000 in his wrongful termination, breach of contract and unfair business



This 2011 photo released by A&E shows Dave Hester in front of the Rags to Riches thrift store in Costa Mesa, Calif.

Associated Press

practices lawsuit. A&E Television Network declined comment, citing the pending lawsuit.

"Storage Wars" follows buyers who bid for abandoned storage lockers hoping to find valuables tucked in-

side.

"A&E regularly plants valuable items or memorabilia," the lawsuit states. Hester's suit claims he was fired from participating in the series' fourth season after expressing concerns that manipulating the storage lockers for the sake of the show was illegal.

He claims that producers stopped adding items to his units after his initial complaints but continued the practice for other series participants. The lawsuit alleges entire units have been staged and the practice may violate a federal law intended to prevent viewers from being de-

ceived when watching a show involving intellectual skills. "Storage Wars" depicts buyers having only a few moments to look into an abandoned unit before deciding on whether to bid on it at auction. The lawsuit claims some of the auction footage on the show is staged. Hester, known as "The Mogul" on the show, has been buying abandoned storage units and re-selling their contents for 26 years, according to the suit.

Nielsen Co. has ranked "Storage Wars" among cable television's top-ranked shows several times since its 2010 debut. □

Van Gogh dazzles at Netherlands' Kroeller-Mueller

TOBY STERLING
Associated Press

AMSTERDAM (AP) — With the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam closed for renovations until April, the world's second-largest collection of the tortured Dutch master's work is stepping into the limelight.

The Kroeller-Mueller museum in the eastern Netherlands is not as well-known but is still considered a jewel among connoisseurs. It has revamped the layout of its central rooms, giving more space and more focus to its very best works.

"Van Gogh really stands central now, both physically in the museum and in the collection as a whole," director Lisette Pelsers said in a telephone interview. This week the museum announced "Vincent is Back," because after a time in which many of its 91 Vincent Van Gogh paintings, 180 drawings and other works have been on loan, they are set to return in style.

It has opened "Native Soil," the first of a two-part exhibition looking at the spectacular changes that Van Gogh underwent in his artistic career, which took place almost entirely in the decade from 1880 to 1890. The appropriately wintery exhibit focuses on Van Gogh's formative years in the Netherlands, with a



In this photo provided by the Kroeller-Mueller Museum in Otterlo on Tuesday, Dec. 11, 2012 the 1887 painting "Self-portrait" by Vincent van Gogh is seen. Associated Press

dark palette and simple, somber subjects. "Native Soil" culminates in what is widely regarded as Van Gogh's first great masterpiece, the 1885 "Potato Eaters." It also shows smaller works that presage the colorful brilliance to come, such as the 1885 "Head of a Woman Wearing a White Hat," which may have been part of Van Gogh's preparations for "Potato Eaters," and the emotive 1882 study "Sorrowful Old Man" in black chalk.

"You can really see him struggling to find his style as an artist," Pelsers said. Beginning in April, the "Land of Light" exhibition will show off the incredible range of color and energy in Van Gogh's late

works. Much of the collection from both periods will remain on display throughout the year, including later masterworks such as his 1888 "Terrace of a Cafe at Night." Also remaining on display are a series of excellent portraits, including a famous 1887 self-portrait, and others such as the 1889 "Portrait of Joseph Roulin." Although the Kroeller-Mueller Museum has decided to more actively promote its Van Gogh works, its collection ranges well beyond that with important paintings by Georges Seurat, Pablo Picasso, Fernand Leger, Piet Mondrian, Paul Gauguin, Giorgio de Chirico and dozens of others. It also features one of Europe's best sculpture gardens, with works by Auguste Rodin, Henry Moore, Niki de Saint Phalle and many more.

The museum is located in Otterlo, Netherlands, not far from the German border.

For the more adventurous, one of the museum's special attractions is the option to begin a visit at one of three park entrances rather than the museum itself. It's easy to borrow one of hundreds of free bicycles and cycle several kilometers (miles) on well-marked paths through the park's gentle dunes and pine trees to the museum. □

U.S. actress Parker hails EU as example for America

BJOERN H. AMLAND
Associated Press

OSLO, Norway (AP) — American actress Sarah Jessica Parker praised the EU on Tuesday for winning the Nobel Peace Prize for pacifying Europe and uniting its different cultures after World War II, and she said the bloc should serve as an example to the United States, given the divisions its recent elections have brought to the surface.

Parker said that while it might be controversial to have awarded the 27-nation EU the prestigious award as it struggles with a financial crisis that is causing hardship to many, it is "a terrific blueprint for us," and one the U.S. should learn from.

"I don't know how we can't," she said in an interview before the Nobel Concert she is hosting with Scottish actor Gerard Butler. "It is also a story that we are trying to tell in our country. We are trying to say to one another: We are different. We are a divided nation, but our goals in many ways are the same.

"We have had two elections that have been really painful for our country." Not everyone approved the decision to give the prize to the EU, which was created 60 years ago as Europe was struggling to re-

cover from a war that killed millions of people. Three Peace Prize laureates — South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Mairead Maguire of Northern Ireland and Adolfo Perez Esquivel from Argentina — said the bloc should not receive the \$1.2 million in Peace Prize money because it relies on military force to ensure security.

Parker, known from the television comedy-drama "Sex and the City," said her parents were peace activists and she remembers attending anti-war rallies at an early age. She said visiting Oslo held a special significance for her since she wanted to see the table around which the decisions are made on awarding the Peace Prize.

Parker said that the EU had helped solve "incredibly complicated old problems and if they can find a way to be a community ... that is an ideal. It is what I want for us." Butler, who worked as a lawyer before becoming an actor, said he lived much of his early life in Scotland, "which has had a very tragic history fighting against England for thousands of years."

"Now we live in a time when this isn't happening, and I think as a Scotsman, as a European, it makes me very proud to be part of this process," he said. □

Dinosaurs And Denial



CHARLES M. BLOW

© 2012 New York Times

Finally, Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida – a Tea Party darling and possible 2016 presidential candidate – admits that dinosaurs and humans didn't co-exist.

Last month, when GQ asked Rubio "how old do you think the Earth is?" he stammered through an answer.

"I'm not a scientist, man. I can tell you what recorded history says. I can tell you what the Bible says, but I think that's a dispute amongst theologians." He continued, "Whether the Earth was created in seven days, or seven actual eras, I'm not sure we'll ever be able to answer that. It's one of the great mysteries."

This week, in an interview with Politico, he attempted to mop up that mess.

He said, "There is no scientific debate on the age of the Earth. I mean, it's established pretty definitively. It's at least 4.5 billion years old."

But then he hedged: "I just think in America we should have the freedom to teach our children whatever it is we believe. And that means teaching them science. They have to know the science, but also parents have the right to teach them the theology and to reconcile those two things."

Why the hedge? Because he is in a party of creationists. According to a June Gallup report, most Republicans (58 percent) believed that God created humans in their present form within the last 10,000 years. Most Democrats and independents did not agree.

This anti-intellectualism is antediluvian. No wonder a 2009 Pew Research Center report found that only 6 percent of scientists identified as Republican and 9 percent identified as conservative.

Furthermore, a 2005 study found that just 11 percent of college professors identified as Republican and 15 percent identified as conservative. Some argue that this simply represents a liberal bias in academia. But just as strong a case could be made that people who absorb facts easily don't suffer fools gladly.

Last month, Gov. Bobby Jindal of Louisiana, the chairman of the Republican Governors Association, said on CNN:

"We need to stop being the dumb party. We need to offer smart, conservative, intelligent ideas and policies."

This is exactly the kind of turn the

Republicans need to take, but Jindal's rhetoric doesn't completely line up with his record. As The Scotsman of Edinburgh reported in June, "Pupils attending privately run Christian schools in the southern state of Louisiana will learn from textbooks next year, which claim Scotland's most famous mythological beast is a living creature." That mythological beast would be the Loch Ness monster.

The Scotsman continued: "Thousands of children are to receive publicly funded vouchers enabling them to attend the schools – which follow a strict fundamentalist curriculum. The Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) programme teaches controversial religious beliefs, aimed at disproving evolution and proving creationism. Youngsters will be told that if it can be proved that dinosaurs walked the Earth at the same time as man, then Darwinism is fatally flawed."

This is all because of a law that Jindal signed. Thankfully, last week a state judge ruled that the voucher program is unconstitutional. But Louisiana isn't the only red state where creationism has state support.

Kentucky has a Creationist Museum that warns visitors to "be prepared to experience history in a completely unprecedented way," according to its website. It continues: "Adam and Eve live in the Garden of Eden. Children play and dinosaurs roam near Eden's Rivers." Unprecedented is certainly one word for it.

Now the museum group is planning to build a creationist theme park, with \$43 million in state tax incentives. It should be noted that Mitt Romney won Kentucky by 23 points last month. President Barack Obama won only four of Kentucky's 120 counties. And the beginning of the world isn't the only point of denial. So is the potential end of it. A March Gallup poll found that Republicans were much less likely than Democrats or independents to say that they worried about global warming. Only 16 percent of Republicans said that they worried a great deal about it, while 42 percent of Democrats and 31 percent of independents did.

This as the National Climatic Data Center reported that "the January-November period was the warmest first 11 months of any year on record for the contiguous United States, and for the entire year, 2012 will most likely surpass the current record (1998, 54.3(DEGREES)F) as the warmest year for the nation."

Surely some of this is because of party isolationism and extremism and what David Frum, the conservative columnist, called the "conservative entertainment complex." But there is also willful ignorance at play in some quarters, and Republicans mustn't simply brush it aside. They must beat it back.

If the Republicans don't want to see their party go the way of the dinosaurs, they have to step out of the past. □



It's Hard To Be A Hero



JOE NOCERA

© 2012 New York Times

On a crisp January day in 2007, a 50-year-old construction worker named Wesley Autrey became a New York hero when he rescued a man who had fallen onto the subway tracks.

A train had just left the station, so the platform was nearly empty except for Autrey, his two daughters and a young man who was having a seizure of some sort. The man fell onto the tracks, in a position, Autrey told me recently, "where he was going to lose his limbs." With another train fast approaching, Autrey instinctively jumped onto the tracks, positioned the man's body safely between the rails, and lay on top of him. Five cars passed over them before the train screeched to a halt.

What prompted me to telephone Autrey was the death Monday of Ki-Suck Han, a Queens man who was pushed onto the 49th Street subway tracks, allegedly by Naeem Davis, a drifter with whom police said he had been having an altercation. This time, there were plenty of people on the platform, most notably R. Umar Abbasi, a photographer who took some horrifying pictures as the subway train closed in on Han. The 22 seconds or so between Han being pushed and the train reaching him was about the same amount of time that Autrey had nearly six years ear-

lier. Yet, on Monday, no one on the crowded platform made a move to help Han until it was too late. (A doctor tried to administer CPR, but he was already dead.)

"People were just standing in fear and shock, not really knowing what was going on" one bystander told a crowd of reporters.

"Some people started running out of the platform. Other people just stood there."

When one of Abbasi's gruesome photographs landed on the front page of The New York Post, the reaction was fierce.

"Someone's taking that picture," said Al Roker on NBC's "Today Show." "Why aren't they helping this guy up?"

Abbasi defended himself in part by saying he used his flash to warn the conductor, but he was also quick to point the finger at others.

"Why didn't the people who were close enough help him?" he asked. "If I had reached him in time I would have pulled him up," he insisted.

We all harbor the hope that if we found ourselves in the same position as Wesley Autrey – or Umar Abbasi – we would act with courage instead of cowardice. Yet behavioral science suggests otherwise. The most famous case of bystanders failing to act took place in 1964, when Kitty Genovese, a young woman living in a quiet Queens neighborhood, was brutally stabbed to death. Despite her repeated screams for help, some 38 people who heard her from their apartments did nothing – not even call the police.

A.M. Rosenthal, the renowned former executive editor of The New York Times, who was then the metropolitan editor – and who had gotten the tip that led to the story – wrote a short book called "Thirty-Eight Witnesses." In it, Rosenthal asked the question that haunted the country in the aftermath of the murder: Why? Why didn't anyone do anything? □

Rosenthal could only guess at the answer because there had been no research on what is now known as "pro-social behavior." But after the story gripped the country, two young social scientists – Bibb Latane, then at Columbia University, and John Darley, who taught at New York University – conducted a series of experiments on the behavior of bystanders.

Their startling conclusion – which is now known as the bystander effect – is that the more people who witness a crime, the less likely any one of them will come to the aid of the victim. Partly this is because when people see others not doing anything, they become confused, not sure if it really is an emergency – "a collective ignorance" says Latane. Another reason, though, is something called the diffusion of responsibility.

"You think to yourself, there are all these other people here. This isn't entirely my problem," says Latane.

Go back to the beginning of this column. The crucial detail in 2007, when viewed through the prism of behavioral science, is that the subway platform was nearly empty. Autrey acted heroically – even leaving his two young children unattended to do so – because there was no one else who could help. On Monday, the 49th Street subway platform was full of people, each possibly thinking that someone else was closer, someone else was stronger, someone else should be responsible for the heroic act. As a result, no one acted.

"I wouldn't do the wrong thing," one man waiting for a subway train told The Times on Tuesday. That's what we all want to think. It's why we are so quick to condemn those who do nothing at such moments.

But let's be honest: We don't really know how we'll act until the moment is upon us. Sadly, the science says we're more likely to do nothing than respond like Wesley Autrey. □

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